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\* The "Plea for the Middle Classes" was the document which led to the foundation of the large groups of "Woodard Schools" which now (1884) include 3 in Sussex (Lancing, Hove & Pierpoint & Wincingby) 1 in Staffs. (Derbystone) 1 in Shropsh. (Ellesmere, dependent on Derbystone) 1 in Somerset. (Taunton) & 1 I think in Yorkshire. J.G.T.

> ~~the~~ a Plea for the Middle Classes by Rev. W. Woodard.

*Wm. H. South - H. C. Albot 5*  
*From the Author*  
AURICULAR CONFESSION:

# A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH OF LEEDS,

OCTOBER 29th, 1848,

WITH A

PREFACE, APPENDIX, AND COPIOUS NOTES,

BY

WALTER FARQUHAR HOOK, D.D.,

VICAR OF LEEDS.

LONDON:

F. & J. RIVINGTON;

PARKER, OXFORD; J. & J. J. DEIGHTON, CAMBRIDGE;

T. HARRISON, LEEDS.

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TO  
THE REV. EDWARD JACKSON, M. A.,  
Clerk in Orders of the Parish of Leeds,  
And Incumbent of St. James's.

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MY DEAR FRIEND,

This publication I dedicate to you, because it relates to a subject upon which we have had many conversations, and upon which, as upon all other points of doctrine and practice, our opinions entirely coincide.

It will be denied by none, that the cultivation of friendly and confidential intercourse between a pastor and the members of his flock, is most desirable; and to you many persons, in all classes of society, are accustomed to resort for spiritual advice. In addressing you, therefore, I cannot be supposed to entertain a wish to interfere with a practice, which, not only the Church of England, but every denomination of Christians would, under certain circumstances, and with certain restrictions, maintain and encourage. It is rather from an anxiety that discredit should not be thrown upon what must be to many a means of comfort, that I protest against the error of those who confound what the

Church permits and recommends, in exceptional cases, with the auricular confession of the Romish Church ; who invest confession with a sacramental character, and who desire to be regarded not merely as the spiritual friends of those who consult them, but as judges sitting in the tribunal.

In the following sermon, I have asserted plainly, on scriptural grounds, and according to the teaching of the Primitive Church, that confession to God is the only confession necessary, while confession to man is the exception to the rule.

I have confirmed my statements, not by reference to the works of hostile theologians of Rome, but by extracts from the writings of those celebrated English divines, who, in a former age, assumed the highest tone in all matters relating to the Church, whose Catholicism is as indisputable as their Protestantism, and whose names are revered by all who venerate the blessed principles of the English Reformation.

They who have forsaken these burning and shining lights, and are seeking illumination from the dark lanterns of Romish theology ; who, instead of resorting to the pure and healthy pastures of old English devotion, have recourse for comfort to the "Paradise of the Soul," and other exciting and unwholesome works of Romish Methodism ; who, despising the manly faith, distinguishable alike from credulity and scepticism, for which the giants of our theological literature have been eminent,

delight or affect to grovel in the absurd superstition of Popish legends ;\* these persons must expect to find their most determined opponents among the faithful servants of the Church of England, who were prepared to listen to them, and to share in the persecution they endured, when they came before the public with a Catena of English divines ; but who will at once reject them, if they seek to poison the pure fountain of Church of England theology, by an inundation from the muddy waters of the Tiber.

Under this impression, I will now advert to certain particulars in which there has grown up a manifest antagonism between the teaching of the ancient divines, and that of some modern theologians of note, name, and influence among us ; whose pride it once was to tread in the steps of our great theological writers of the 17th century.

I. In the controversies with Rome the old English divines took the liberal line against the Puritans, who, in the spirit of the Papacy, damned all that were not of their own way of thinking ; and they maintained that a man, THOUGH a Papist,

\* "A religion, that hath made wicked men, saints ; and saints, gods. Even by the confession of Papists, lewd and undeserving men have leaped into their calendar.....And, once sainted, they have the honour of altars, temples, invocations ; and, some of them, in a style fit only for their Maker. I know not, whether that blessed Virgin receive more indignity from her enemies, that deny her ; or these her flatterers, that deify her."—*Bishop Hall.—Serious Dissuasive from Popery.*

might be saved. "I doubted not," said the judicious Hooker,\* "but that God was merciful to thousands of our fathers, which lived in Popish superstition: for they sinned ignorantly. *But we have the light of the truth.*" Upon which Archbishop Whitgift remarks: "Not Papists but our fathers. Not they all, but many of them. Not living and dying Papists, but living in Popish superstitions. Not simply might, but might by the mercy of God, be saved. Ignorance did not excuse the fault to make it no fault; but the less their fault was with respect to ignorance, the more hope we have, that God was merciful to them."

What wisdom is there here! These great divines did not deny the possibility of salvation to a Papist. In spite of his Romanism a man may rest on the rock of ages and be saved: we should say the same of a Muggletonian. But we add, "We have the light of the truth." They are saved, not on account of their darkness, but in spite of it.

But in the controversy, as at present managed, the very reverse is the course which is taken by many who at one time were accounted High Churchmen, though no longer deserving that title, if by a High Churchman is meant one who adheres to the principles of the English Reformation, and the teaching of our formularies.

We find it now made a matter of hesitating apology for the Church of England, that she has

\* Walton's Life.

passed a censure on the Roman system of multiplying mediators, beside the One Mediator between God and man ; our differences with Rome are said to turn on matters of fact and detail, rather than on principles ; and instead of thankfully acknowledging that, through Divine Providence blessing our Reformation, “ we have the light of the truth ” restored, it is intimated that our light is but dim twilight at best, enough to help us to grope our way, but far from enabling us to walk in joy and liberty. Well may we say,

Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis  
Tempus eget.

I am sorry to see this line of defence adopted by one who is dear to the Church of England as the author of the *Christian Year*, and who is dear to me personally by many recollections, and an acquaintance of no short standing. The defence of the Church of England which he has set up in the preface to his sermons, if it persuades a few to tolerate the Church of England, while their hearts are in Rome, is calculated to unsettle many more. It almost removes the ground from beneath us.

It is with no mincing phrases that the Church of Rome attacks us, and it is not by soft words that we must repel our assailants. Hickes, the non-juror, was as high a Churchman as can be produced, and he did not think it necessary to prove his Churchmanship by bandying compli-



ments with Papists. “Whereas,” said he, “you assert that either your religion or ours is a damnable heresy, you may take as much of damnable heresy to yourselves as you deserve. But as for us, I challenge you to shew any one damnable or dangerous heresy, or heretical doctrine, that we profess. Nay, I challenge you to shew any one dangerous, positive, or negative doctrine, that the Church of England holds, or that she doth not hold all things needful to salvation. But if false and dangerous, or absurd and impossible, nay pernicious and impious doctrines, contrary to Scripture expounded by Catholic tradition, derogatory to the honour of Jesus Christ and the Christian religion, and destructive of the rights and liberties of the Catholic Church, be damnable heresies, then your religion, by which I mean the Popery of it, is a multiform damnable heresy, as we doubt not, but a truly free and general council, could such a one be had, would soon determine; and to such a council we are ready to appeal.”

II. This brings me secondly to remark, that our good old Church of England divines did not shrink from calling things by their right names. “Popish superstitions, and gross and grievous abominations,” were terms applied by Hooker to the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome, which are spoken of by Barrow as “impious errors, scandalous practices, and superstitious rites.” Archbishop Laud, who, for his zeal against Popery, is as

unpopular with the Romanizers as he is with the Presbyterianizers, asserts that "the Church of Rome errs grossly, dangerously, damnably," and remarks, that all Protestants, including those of the Church of England, "unanimously agree that there is great peril of damnation for any man to live or die in the Roman persuasion." Even Thorn-dike wonders that "any Christian can trust his soul to such a Church," and says, "I do not allow salvation to any that shall change," from the Church of England to the Church of Rome.

It may be said that softer language becomes a more refined age. Be it so. But let me ask, is softer language used by the Romanizer to those who are in error on the Puritan side? I cannot discover in either extreme much improvement in this respect. We do indeed find the Presbyterianizing journals very moderate and very cautious in their language towards Protestant dissent: but how is it when they have to deal with a poor High Churchman? And not one whit better is it on the side of the Romanizing journals: very gentle are they in their dealings with Romish dissenters, but for the Protestant Dissenters and the benighted individuals who remain in the *via media* which they have forsaken, we look in vain for the very delicate expressions which become the refinement of modern polemics.

Until this soft language is used towards all parties, we may suspect that a Presbyterianizer has



a leaning towards Protestant, and a Romanizer towards Romish dissent, and that the soft language is to be traced, not to moderation, but to the existence of an affection towards those who are without the pale on the one side or on the other.

III. The third very marked point of difference between our old divines and some of our modern theologians, is to be seen in the contempt expressed by the latter, and the admiration of the former, for the work of our Reformation. How beautifully is it described by Bishop Bull: "The Church of England in her Reformation affected no unnecessary change or innovation. Indeed, she made no change or innovation, but of those things that were themselves manifest changes or innovations, yea, somewhat worse; such as . . . image-worship, the worship and invocation of saints and angels, the dry communion, the senseless and unreasonable service of God in an unknown tongue, enjoined the people, and not understood by them. Wherein, as I have already shewn, every man's reason and conscience will tell him, that the change is made for the better. She hath also shaken off, (and it was high time so to do, seeing that St. Augustine so long ago complained of it) that intolerable yoke of ceremonies, many of which were perfectly insignificant and ridiculous, some directly sinful, and their number in the whole so great, as to require that intention of mind, which ought to be employed about more

weighty and important matters ; yet retaining still (to shew that she was not over nice and scrupulous) some few ceremonies, that had on them the stamp of venerable antiquity, or otherwise recommended themselves by their decency and fitness. In a word, the authors of our Reformation dealt with our Church as they did with our temples or material churches. They did not pull them down and raise new structures in their places, no, nor so much as new consecrate the old ones ; but only removed the objects and occasions of idolatrous worship, (at least out of the more open and conspicuous places,) and took away some little superstitious trinkets, in other things leaving them as they found them, and freely and without scruple making use of them."

I need not multiply quotations on a subject upon which they might be multiplied *ad infinitum*.

With respect to the present discourse, circumstances, as you are aware, have occurred, which render it necessary for me to speak. Had it been otherwise, I should have patiently waited for that futurity of good, which I am sanguine enough to expect, in spite of present follies and existing evils.

It is impossible for a movement to take place, even when it is in itself good, without being attended with incidental evil, but we generally find, after faults have been amended or forgiven, and follies forgotten, a residuum of benefit.

It was a movement for good, when we asserted the Catholicism of the Church of England, and refused to see her accounted as merely a Protestant sect. But the effect of a movement which, properly directed is strong against Rome, has been marred by the conduct of those who, in their abhorrence of Puritanism, have confounded Catholicism with Popery, and have thought it necessary to denounce what is one of the glories of the Church of England,—her Protestantism. Protestant she is as opposed to Popery: Catholic, as opposed to Puritanism. We must deeply regret these Romanizing symptoms and tendencies. But still this benefit has resulted, that the distinctive points of our Catholicism, and our claims to be a Catholic Church, have become very generally perceived and acknowledged.

It was a movement for good, when our attention was forcibly directed to the duty of fasting. But abuse attended it, when asceticism was regarded as almost identical with Christianity, and we were threatened with monasteries by those who, in direct opposition to Scripture,\* were zealous for the celibacy of the clergy. This fanaticism has, to a great extent, passed away, owing to the marriage of some of the most enthusiastic maintainers of the celibacy; many of whom have been compelled to say with Benedict: “When I said I would die

\* On Scriptural grounds the difficulty is to prove that the clergy ought not to marry, not that they may marry.

a bachelor, I did not think I should live till I were married." In their happy homes, the parsonages of England, and in their children, brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they behold what is more pleasing to God than a house full of monks or a family of nuns. But still there has been a beneficial result: fasting, though not accepted as a means of grace, is generally acknowledged as an exercise important for keeping the body under, and as a means of humiliation: and the fast days of the Church are observed, while, what is more important, all religious persons have come to the conclusion that self-denial for the good of others is a Christian duty.

It was a movement for good, when the study of ecclesiastical architecture received an impulse at Cambridge, and the importance of ceremonial observances was asserted. But when the study of architecture led young men to an admiration of mediæval practices and doctrines; when the Breviary and Missal were consulted and admired; when, as Presbyterianizers take the meeting-house, Romanizers took the mass-house for a model; when the decent ceremonies of the Reformed Church were despised, and theatrical mummeries, un-English, unreal, and ridiculous, were adopted by young men pleased to obtain notoriety at an easy rate, there was an attendant evil much to be deplored. Nevertheless, good has resulted: old churches are repaired and restored, and new ones built in better



style than heretofore; while a neglect of the decencies of our ceremonial is almost sure to give offence.

A few years ago we heard much discourse of the dreadful nature of sin after baptism, and it was difficult to distinguish the tenets of some of the younger clergy upon this subject from the Novatian heresy. Nothing was further from the intention, we may be sure, of the learned divine who, by some statements not sufficiently guarded, and by taking, as he too frequently does, a one-sided view of the question, first introduced this topic of modern controversy: but such was the case. The incautious statements propounded are now nearly forgotten; and this good has resulted, that serious men are more deeply impressed by a sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, of their deep responsibility as Christians, and of the necessity of sincere repentance.

Under such a state of things, difficulties will be suggested, and doubts arise, not only to morbid minds, and in scrupulous consciences, but to persons of tender and affectionate dispositions; and a desire has been expressed by many persons for more of spiritual guidance and disciplinary direction, than has hitherto existed practically in the Church of England.

How far it is desirable to encourage this habit of mind, and in what way this demand is to be met, may admit of dispute. But there ought to

be no dispute among members and ministers of the Church of England, on the subject of the Romish confessional. Any approximation to that system should be regarded with disgust and abhorrence.

If I relied upon my own judgment upon the subject, I should have an hesitation in giving utterance to an opinion so decided. But it is to the notes rather than to my sermon that I invite attention, and it will be found that the opinion of those of our divines who have directed their attention to this subject, is, that Auricular Confession, in the technical sense of the word, is neither scriptural, primitive, nor expedient. It is rejected by the Primitive Church, the Greek Church, and the Reformed Church of England. It is retained by the Church of Rome, which is in itself an objection, since it is retained by that corrupt communion exclusively.

We must oppose the Presbyterianizers, who would rationalize the Church of England : we must oppose equally the Romanizers, by whom an attempt is made to re-introduce among us the evil practices of the middle ages ; and you, I am sure, will subscribe with me to the following sentence from Hickes : “ that the Church of England, as it now stands without any further reformation, is apostolical in doctrine, worship, and government ; and would have been esteemed by the faithful, in all ages from the time of the apostles, a pure and

sound member of the Catholic Church. I heartily thank Almighty God, by Whose good providence I have been bred up in her communion, and called to the great honour of being one of her priests; and I beseech Him of His infinite goodness, to give all her clergy and people grace to live up to her principles of piety, loyalty, justice, charity, purity, temperance, and sobriety. I am sure it must be ours, and not her fault, if we be not the best Christians, the best subjects, and the best friends and best neighbours in the world."

I remain, my dear friend,

Your's faithfully,

W. F. HOOK.

VICARAGE, LEEDS,  
30th Oct., 1848.



# SERMON.

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## I. JOHN, i. 9.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

So much that is unsound in theory, incorrect in statement, and dangerous in a practical point of view; so much that is contrary to the principles of the Church of England, and that is plainly unscriptural, has been urged, of late, on the subject of confession; the lust of power and of meddling in some, and want of discernment and neglect of enquiry in those who confound medieval corruptions with primitive truth, have led to such confusion of ideas upon the subject, that it becomes my duty as a faithful pastor, to lay before you the doctrine of the Church of England, which is also the doctrine of the Primitive Church, which, moreover, is the doctrine of Holy Scripture, upon a practice which at one time demoralized the Christian world, obliterated the doctrine of Justification by Faith, and rendered necessary a reformation of the Church, such as restored us in this, as in other respects, to our Christian liberty.

It is said, and said too by some who appear to consider such doctrines consistent with the rule and practice of the Church of England, that Confession is *a means of grace*.

If it be so, it is of course our duty, as ministers of the Church of England, to press the observance of it upon the members of our several congregations. Sinners as you all are, we must urge upon you the observance of all the means of grace, and bid you prepare your hearts to receive the same.

But does the Church of England command confession of sins to a priest? Where is the injunction to be found? It is, as every one who is acquainted with our Prayer Book and our Formularies, is well aware, commanded no where.

Mark, then, the obvious and immediate conclusion: the Church of England does not consider confession to a priest as a means of grace. If it were a means of grace, it would be generally necessary to the salvation of sinners, and upon all sinners the Church of England would enjoin it. By not enjoining it upon any one, the Church of England asserts her Protestantism, and declares that she differs from the Church of Rome,\* as in other respects, so also in this. She does not regard confession to a priest as a means of grace.

And what saith Holy Scripture? Search the Scriptures from one end to the other; from Moses to Malachi, and from Matthew to the Apocalypse, and not one word in all the Bible will you find about

\* Note A, Appendix.

confession to a priest. If confession to a priest were necessary ; if, that is to say, it were a means of grace, surely we should find some express, some unequivocal injunction for the observance of it. But not only is it not enjoined ; it is not even suggested.

The Church of Rome does not, in her Tridentine Council, refer us to a single passage of Scripture as containing an injunction upon the subject. She merely quotes the 23rd verse of the 20th chapter of St. John, and, assuming the very point in debate, asserts that the duties of the confessional form an essential part of the sacerdotal office ; and this, their gratuitous inference, our Reformers rejected, because it is not authorized or confirmed by the practice of the Primitive Church.

This is our mode, the mode of our Reformation, of using tradition, and of deferring to the practice and teaching of the Primitive Church. The Romanists add tradition to Scripture ; they take as their rule of faith—Scripture *and* tradition. Our rule of faith is the Bible only : but if there is a dispute as to what the meaning of the Bible is, then we take into consideration the meaning attached to the Scriptural revelation, by those to whom the Apostles preached, and by the Churches established by them.\* “If what appears but *probably* to be taught in Scripture,” says Dr. Waterland, one of our greatest divines, “itself appears to have been certainly taught in the primitive and Catholic Church ; such probability, so

\* See the author’s Sermon on Tradition in his Five Sermons preached before the University of Oxford, and Note B, Appendix.

confirmed and strengthened, carries with it the force of demonstration.”\*

Now all the world knows that Auricular Confession was not enjoined in the Roman Church until the year 1215, and that it has *never* been enjoined in the Greek Church. It was established in the 13th century, being a mediæval, not a primitive doctrine. As being neither primitive nor scriptural, it was rejected by us at our Reformation; and it was re-established and re-enforced as one of the permanent corruptions of Romanism, in the Romish Council of Trent.†

That confession of sins to God only is sufficient, is a truth asserted at least twenty times by St. Chrysostom; and is a truth maintained universally by the Fathers of the fifth century,‡ as may be seen, by a reference to our great divines, Taylor, Bramhall, Usher, Bingham, and a host of others; who, while they gloried in the title of Catholic, would not repudiate the designation of Protestant.||

But while Scripture, the Primitive Church, and the Church of England, all distinguished from the Mediæval and Romish Church, declare with one voice that confession to God only is sufficient, yet what saith the Church of England? In the “Warning for the Celebration of the Holy Communion,” the Curate is directed to say to those of whose souls he has the cure: “Because it is requisite, that no man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in God’s mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore

\* Preface to Sermons at the Lady Moyer’s Lecture.

† Note C.

‡ Note D.

|| Note E.

*if there be any of you, who by this means,"* namely, self-examination and self-denial, "*cannot quiet his own conscience therein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's Word, and open his grief; that by the ministry of God's holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness.*" In the Office for the Visitation of the Sick, this rubric occurs: "Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special Confession of his sins, *if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter.* After which Confession, the Priest shall absolve him (*if he humbly and heartily desire it*) after this sort."\*

Now here, observe, is a permission, not an injunction, and the cases referred to are *exceptional* cases. The rule in the Church of England is to confess our sins to God only; to examine ourselves, and to be our own spiritual directors. It is a portion of our responsibility, and such responsibility we cannot in ordinary cases shift upon another. The exception is with respect to those who cannot in this way, according to the general rules, obtain a sufficient trust in God's mercy, and a quiet conscience. *If* you cannot do this, then select some minister of God's holy word, not of necessity the parish priest, but some one in whose spiritual wisdom and experience you can confide, and open to him your grief. And so with respect to the sick: *if* a man feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter; if he cannot, by an exercise of his own mind,

\* Note F.



obtain that confidence in the divine mercy, which is a constituent of true faith; *then*, in that exceptional case, you may move him to confession.\*

It is not by confession, but by faith, that we are justified: but the faith which justifies, is the faith of a penitent man, and the question will occur, Am I sufficiently penitent to be justified by my faith? It is a doubt upon this point, when it arises, that sends us to seek advice from another; and that other, of course, cannot give us the advice we need, unless we unburthen to him our conscience, and open our grief. The Church of England, therefore, permits, and in some cases advises, confession to a minister of the gospel; but mark the distinction; she never enjoins it as a means of grace, she only sanctions it as a means of consolation, with a special indulgence to the sick.

We go to the sick bed; we see a man wretched; unable to find comfort for himself, or to receive consolation from us;—it is clear that his conscience is troubled with some weighty matter. How can we console him? How advise him, unless we know what is the cause of his affliction and grief? We urge him, therefore, to make a special confession of his sins.

He confesses; if he were well, we should, after advising him how to test the sincerity of his repentance, direct him to go to Church, and hear God's pardon pronounced upon him, in common with others; to receive absolution in and with the congregation.

But the sick man is unable to do this; he is penitent; he believes that Jesus died for his sins; he

\* Note G.

earnestly desires to have the fact of his forgiveness authoritatively declared, and to his humble and hearty desire the Church condescends.

As a means of consolation, confession to man is recommended or permitted, in some shape or other, by every Christian community. And it is as a means of consolation, that the advice is given in the 16th verse of the 5th chapter of St. James;\* the only passage in Scripture, I believe, that contains a direction to us to confess our sins to any other than God Himself. St. James is speaking to the afflicted and to the sick; and he exhorts men under those circumstances, to seek consolation through mutual prayer; and in order that the prayer may be mutual, he advises them to confess to one another their faults. There are persons whose consciences are not only tender, but scrupulous, full of scruples; there are others, who feel that they cannot bear the weight of sin by which they are oppressed, unless they have the advice of a friend; others again there are, who desire sympathy, or who are perplexed as to the proper course to be pursued in overcoming the evils which are within them, or in resisting temptations from without: all such persons are, not commanded, but recommended, to open their griefs, and tell their sorrows to some friend, in whose wisdom, experience, and piety, they can confide; not commanded, as if confession were a means of grace, but recommended, because such confession may be to them a means of comfort. And these their griefs they may open to one another, not of necessity, observe, to

\* Note H.



a priest, but to any friend. Let the child seek such a friend in his parent; the wife in her husband, and the husband in his wife. In this way let friend take sweet counsel with friend, as they walk together in the House of the Lord.

The minister of the Gospel is only recommended, because such exceptional cases are likely to come frequently before him, and he therefore is most likely to be best qualified to act as an adviser when difficulties occur. If confession were a means of grace, we should be directed to have recourse to the minister of the parish, because in the administration of the means of grace, the efficacy depends not upon personal character, but upon the divine commission. But when we seek, not grace, but comfort and advice, we seek for a minister, who by his learning and discretion, is competent to afford us the intellectual assistance we require. Nor is it difficult in men of age and experience to find the qualifications needed. A minister of the Church of England is not obliged to master all the minute and sometimes disgusting details through which a confessor of the Church of Rome is obliged to wade, in order to be qualified for his office.\* In the sacrament of penance, as they style it, the Romanists are commanded to unlock their hearts to the priest, and persons of all ages and both sexes, standing before him in their moral nudity, are required to submit, not only to general questions as to a state of sin and repentance, but to the most minute and searching questions as to their inmost thoughts; a system this,

\* Note I.

which renders the confessor's office fit for no man, and especially unfit for the young; a system which has given rise to hypocrisy in some, and to a reliance upon their works in others; a system which is of benefit to a few only of those who have recourse to it, and is often, as Romanist writers themselves admit, a pollution to the confessor.

Very different is it when confession is only resorted to as a means of comfort or counsel. As every one is at liberty to confess or not, so in making his confession, every one is at liberty to decide as to what he will confess and what withhold. And he, of whom we seek the comfort or the counsel, is only required to seek information as to the facts which bear upon the point, upon which his opinion or advice is sought. If we withhold from him any facts which relate to the case, we are guilty, not of sin, but of folly; of folly, similar to that of a man, who in consulting a physician or a lawyer, keeps back from their knowledge a portion of the truth. And what is required in him we consult is, skill in searching out the various artifices of self-deception: a skill, in which those soon become proficient who have had any spiritual experience themselves, and whose hearts are honest.

But while we say this, be it always remembered, that any kind of confession to man is an exception, not the rule.\* "If we confess our sins," not to the priest, but to God, "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Here, and elsewhere in Scripture, we find that to the

\* Note K.

confession which the penitent sinner makes to God alone, the promise of forgiveness is annexed; "which," saith Archbishop Usher, "no priest upon earth hath power to make void, upon pretence that himself or some of his fellows were not first particularly acquainted with the business."\*

To confess our sins to God, and to accustom ourselves to this duty is absolutely necessary, if we would really know what sinners we are. Until we are accustomed to self-examination, until we scrutinize our motives as well as our actions, our principles as well as our conduct, we are apt to be self-complacent, to think that we are not worse than our neighbours, and to imagine that all will be well with us in the end. And what is the consequence? there is no clear perception of our need of a Redeemer, a Saviour, a Divine Intercessor, at the throne of grace: there is no clinging to Christ by faith, no appropriation of His righteousness, no application of His merits: Christ is not to us all that He must be to those who feel and know that except in Him we are all but as dead men.

We should accustom ourselves to examine our conduct minutely, and in detail, and then, regarding God as a Personal God, to Him, as to a Person, confess our sins, one by one, as we discover them, asking forgiveness. It is not sufficient to be conscious of our sins. No, we should soon deceive ourselves if we were content with the consciousness of sin. "A general persuasion that thou art a sinner, will neither so humble, nor bridle thy soul, as the catalogue of

\* Usher's Answer to a Jesuit, p. 76.

thy sins examined severally, and continually kept in mind."\* Just so is it with respect to mental prayer; the prayer made by the mind, when not a word is spoken, is known unto God, the Searcher of hearts, and is by Him heard and accepted: nevertheless, He requires more than this,—even vocal prayer. He would have us give utterance in words to what we desire; for if we did not accustom ourselves to speak in our prayer, our prayers would soon cease to be particular, and become little more than a form of meditation. So likewise, consciousness of sin will not suffice to make us truly penitent; we shall find it expedient to confess with our lips; to speak of our sins, and to proclaim, as it were in the presence of angels, our misery and our shame. Then it is, my brethren, that we become duly and truly sensible of the impossibility of our being saved by our works; then it is, that with the strong hand of faith we grasp the Saviour, Who only can rescue us from that bottomless pit, towards which the weight of our sin is pressing us.

No one who is accustomed to consult his Bible, can doubt for one moment that this is a duty; that confession is, like prayer and meditation, incumbent upon every one who names the name of Christ, and would realize the blessings of the Christian covenant. We detect sin, after self-examination, in our best actions; we confess it, we lament it, we plead the merits of Jesus, our Saviour; He intercedes for us, He pardons us, He sends His Spirit to guard us against falling

\* Jeremy Taylor.



into the sins we have repented of; and we rejoice to hear His minister declare that those are absolved who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy gospel; and we hear him speaking the word of God. We overcome in this way one sin or evil propensity, not at once, but by a long course of such spiritual discipline; and still we have recourse to self-examination, and we discover something further that is evil in us; we confess it, we again plead, and by faith apply to our souls the merits of our Saviour; we seek fresh supplies of grace, through the ordinances of the sanctuary, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper: and so we advance, continually putting away evil, and continually receiving grace, until ripe for eternity, we are transplanted to the heaven opened to us by our Redeemer's blood.

I have described what has been experienced by those who are spiritual among us, and I have stated the course which they have pursued and are pursuing.

And now I conclude, with pointing out in one sentence, the difference between ourselves and the Church of Rome. The Church of Rome regards confession to man as a means of grace; this we deny; at the same time we regard it as a means of comfort to weak minds and scrupulous consciences, and to persons in difficulties or in doubt. The Church of Rome makes it the rule—we, the exception. The Church of Rome commands it; the Church of England permits it. The Church of England, in accordance with Scripture and the Primitive Church, and the Greek Church, asserts that confession to God alone is sufficient,—is the rule—is the course which ought to be pursued in all but

exceptional cases; and in this respect, to the Church of England, to the primitive Church, to the Greek Church, and to the written and infallible word of the living God, the Church of Rome stands opposed.\*

\* Note L.

## APPENDIX.

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### NOTE A.

The 6th canon of the council of Trent, on what that council styles the "most holy sacrament of repentance," stands thus : " If any shall deny, that sacramental confession was instituted and is necessary for salvation by divine right, or shall say that the custom of confessing secretly to the priest alone, which the Catholic Church has always observed from the beginning, and continues to observe, is foreign to the institution and command of Christ, and is of human invention ; let him be accursed."

" Here sacramental confession is affirmed to be of divine institution, and auricular confession likewise, and he is accursed who shall deny it. This is bravely said ; yet the Fathers might have recollected that in the Latin Church as late as 813, it was matter of dispute whether there was need to confess to a priest at all, as appears from the thirty-third canon of the Council of Cabaillon, which is as follows : " *Quidam Deo solummodo confiteri debere dicunt peccata, quidam vero sacerdotibus confitenda esse percensent : quod utrumque non sine magno fructu intra sanctam fit Ecclesiam. Ita dumtaxat ut et Deo, qui remissor est peccatorum, confiteamur peccata nostra, et cum David dicamus, Delictum meum cognitum tibi feci, &c. et secundum institutionem Apostoli, confiteamur alterutrum peccata nostra, et oremus pro invicem ut salvemur. Confessio itaque quæ Deo fit, purgat peccata, ea vero quæ sacerdoti fit, docet qualiter ipsa purgentur peccata,*" &c.—Conc. vii. 1279. Was Leo the Third asleep, that he could suffer such heresy to be broached and not denounced ? But all the world knows, that till 1215, no decree of Pope or council can be



adduced enjoining the *necessary* observance of such a custom. Then at the council of Lateran, Innocent III. commanded it. As the Latin Church affords no sanction to the assertion of the Tridentine fathers, so is it in vain to look for it among the Greeks, for there, as Socrates, Hist. Eccles. v. 19, and Sozomen, Hist. Eccles. vii. 16, inform us, the whole confessional was abolished by Nectarius, the Archbishop of Constantinople, in the 4th century, by reason of an indecency which was committed on a female penitent, when pursuing her penance ; which, surely, he would not have ventured to have done had he deemed it a divine institution. Sozomen, in his account of the confessional, says, that the public confession in the presence of all the people, which formerly obtained, having been found grievous φορτικὸν ὡς εἰκὸς, a well-bred, *silent*, and prudent presbyter was set in charge of it ; thus plainly denoting the change from public to auricular confessions.”—*Perceval's Romish Schism*.

To this I would add that, according to Sozomen, this system of private confession was not yet introduced at Rome, when it had been used for some time at Constantinople : for he says that in the West, and Rome especially, the penitents had no other practice than that of mourning in public classes.

#### NOTE B.

When we speak of Tradition, or the Fathers, being authorities in the interpretation of Scripture, we do not mean to say that any person may, after studying the Fathers, and placing his own private interpretation upon them, assert that the opinion he so forms is a doctrine of the Church of England. We only assert the principles of our Reformation. It is asked, why we should defer to our Prayer Book and Formularies ? are they infallible ? We answer, No ! but the probability is that they are right ; a probability, amounting to a moral certainty on all important points, because of the principle upon which our Reformers acted. The Romanists, at the

council of Trent, took for their guidance the Christian principle developed, and, as we see from Scripture, corrupted, in the medieval Church. We, on the contrary, took for our guidance at our Reformation, the Bible interpreted by the doctrine and practice of the Primitive Church : hence our Prayer Book and our Formularies. The Prayer Book, the Articles, and the Formularies, were reformed or compiled by men who adopted this principle ; and a private divine, even if he thinks that on some minor points a mistake has been made, ought, in modesty, to presume that he is more likely to have been mistaken, than that many acting on the same principle, were in error. In this respect, as in the interpretation of Scripture, he thinks that he is probably the erroneous party, if his private judgment differs from the judgment of many who were at least as able and as learned as himself. A man more versed in Patristics could hardly be found than Archbishop Bramhall, yet he says : “ I submit myself to the representative Church, that is, a free general Council, or so general as can be procured ; and until then, to the Church of England, wherein I was baptized, or to a national English synod : to the determination of all which, and each of them respectively, according to the distinct degrees of their authority, I yield a conformity and compliance, or at the least, and to the lowest of them, an acquiescence.”—*Bramhall's Works*, ii. p. 22.

If there were a divine of that age more learned than Bramhall in what relates to primitive Christianity, it was Bishop Bull, and what says Bishop Bull in the *Examen Censuræ* ? “ Whatever I may have written, either in this or other books, most humbly and most willingly do I submit it to the judgment of our holy mother the English Church ; her to whom I have hitherto devoted myself in all filial obedience, and to whom, while I live, by God's help, I will devote myself.”—*Examen Censuræ*,—*Anglo-Catholic Library*, p. 5.

On the like principle acted the judicious Hooker :—“ We

make not our childish appeals, sometimes from our own to foreign Churches, sometimes from both unto Churches ancienter than both are, in effect always from all others to our own selves ; but, as becometh them that follow with all humility the ways of peace, we honour, reverence, and obey, in the very next degree unto God, the voice of the Church of God wherein we live. They, whose wits are too glorious to fall to so low an ebb, they which have risen and swoln so high that the walls of ordinary rivers are unable to keep them in, they whose wanton contentions in the cause whereof we have spoken, do make all where they go a sea, even they, at their highest float, are constrained both to see and grant, that what their fancy will not yield to like, their judgment cannot with reason condemn.”—*Hooker, book v. sec. 71.*

The following words of Bishop Stillingfleet may be read with advantage at the present time :—“ I cannot see why the authority of some very few persons, though of great learning, should bear sway against the constant opinion of our Church ever since the Reformation ; since our Church is not now to be formed according to the singular fancies of some few (though learned men,) much less to be modelled by the caprichios of superstitious fanatics, who prefer some odd opinions and ways of their own before the received doctrine and practice of the Church they live in. Such as these, we rather pity their weakness than regard their censures ; and are only sorry when our adversaries make such properties of them, as by their means to beget in some a disaffection to our Church. Which I am so far from, (whatever malice and peevishness may suggest to the contrary,) that, upon the greatest inquiry I can make, I esteem it the best Church of the Christian world ; and think my time very well employed (whatever thanks I meet with for it) in defending its cause, and preserving persons in the communion of it.”—*Preface to Discourse on Idolatry.—Works, vol. v.*

When we read these passages from the great divines of the Church of England, divines, whose *Patristics* and *Patrology* would put to shame the most learned of our modern theologians, it excites a just indignation to hear juvenile clerics, who, in conscious ignorance, not very long ago, trembled under the mild scrutiny of a bishop's chaplain, traducing, defaming, and sneering at the Church of England, whose divines are scarcely known to them by name, while they think to shew their skill or their liberality by contending that the abominations of Rome, are less abominable than Hooker, and Barrow, and Usher, and all English divines, who lived before the present age, supposed them to be.

#### NOTE C.

In this note I shall present the reader with copious extracts from some of our great divines. I do so, because, while all parties admit their authority, their works are little studied; the Presbyterianizers in our Church consulting the works of non-conformist theologians, and the Romanizing extreme studying Romish writers, and works of Romish devotion. The learned Archbishop Usher, the friend of Laud, whose Answer to the Jesuit is itself unanswerable, is the author I shall quote first.

“The diverse sentences of the doctors touching this question, whether external confession were necessary or not, are at large laid down by Gratian; who in the end leaveth the matter in suspense, and concludeth in this manner: ‘Upon what authorities, or upon what strength of reasons both these opinions are grounded, I have briefly laid open. But whether of them we should rather cleave to, is reserved to the judgment of the reader. For both of them have for their favourers both wise and religious men.’ And so the matter rested undetermined 1150 years after Christ; howsoever the Roman



correctors of Gratian do tell us, that now the case is altered, and that 'it is most certain, and must be held for most certain, that the sacramental confession of mortal sins is necessary, used in that manner, and at such time, as in the council of Trent after other councils it is appointed.' But the first council wherein we find any thing determined touching this necessity, is that of Lateran under Innocent the Third, wherein we heard that transubstantiation was established: for there it was ordained, that '*Omnis utriusque sexus fidelis*, every faithful one of either sex, being come to years of discretion, should by himself alone, once in the year at least, faithfully confess his sins unto his own priest; and endeavour according to his strength to fulfil the penance enjoined unto him, receiving reverently at least at Easter the sacrament of the Eucharist: otherwise, that both being alive he should be kept from entering into the Church, and being dead should want Christian burial.' Since which determination Thomas Aquinas, in his exposition of the text of the fourth book of the Sentences, distinct. 17, holdeth the denial of the necessity of confession unto salvation to be heresy; which before that time, saith Bonaventure, in his Disputations upon the same fourth book, was not heretical; forasmuch as many Catholic doctors did hold contrary opinions therein, as appeareth by Gratian.

"But Medina will not admit by any means, that it should be accounted 'strictly heresy;' but would have it said, that 'it savours of heresy.' And for this decree of confession to be made once in the year, he saith, that it 'doth not declare nor interpret any divine right of the thing, but rather appointeth the time of confessing.' Durand thinketh that it may be said, that this statute containeth 'an holy and wholesome exhortation of making confession, and then adjoineth a precept of the receiving of the Eucharist, backed with a penalty;' or if both of them be precepts, that 'the penalty respecteth only the precept of communicating (of the trans-



gression whereof knowledge may be taken,) and not the precept of confession ;' of the transgression whereof the Church can take no certain notice, and therefore can appoint no certain penalty for it. But howsoever, this we are sure of, that the canonists afterwards held no absolute necessity of obedience to be required therein, as unto a sacramental institution ordained by Christ for obtaining remission of sins ; but a canonical obedience only, as unto an useful constitution of the Church. And therefore, where Gratian in his first distinction *de Pœnitentia* had, in the 34th chapter and the three next following, propounded the allegations which made for them, who held that men might obtain pardon for their sins without any oral confession of them, and then proceeded to the authorities which might seem to make for the contrary opinion ; Johannes Semeca,\* at the beginning of that part, upon those words of Gratian, *Alii e contrario testantur*, putteth to this gloss : 'From this place until the section, *His auctoritatibus*, he allegeth for the other part, that sin is not forgiven unto such as are of years without confession of the mouth ; which yet is false,' saith he. But this free dealing of his did so displease friar Manrique, who, by command of Pius Quintus, set out a censure upon the glosses of the Canon Law, that he gave direction these words, 'which yet is false,' should be clean blotted out. Which direction of his, notwithstanding, the Roman correctors under Gregory XIII. did not follow ; but letting the words still stand, give them a check only with this marginal annotation : 'Nay it is most true, that without confession, in desire at least, the sin is not forgiven.'

"In like manner, where the same Semeca holdeth it to be the better opinion, that confession was 'ordained by a certain tradition of the universal Church, rather than by the authority of the new or old Testament,' and inferreth there-

\* Johannes Semeca flourished about the year 1260. He was an honest German, who opposed the exactions of Pope Clement IV.

upon, that it is 'necessary among the Latins, but not among the Greeks, because that tradition did not spread to them;' friar Manrique commandeth all that passage to be blotted out; but the Roman correctors clap this note upon the margin for an antidote: 'Nay, confession was ordained by our Lord, and by God's law is necessary to all that fall into mortal sin after baptism, as well Greeks as Latins.' And for this they quote only the 14th session of the council of Trent; where that opinion is accursed in us, which was held two or three hundred years ago by the men of their own religion, among whom Michael of Bononia,\* who was prior general of the order of the Carmelites in the days of pope Urban the Sixth, doth conclude strongly out of their own received grounds, 'that confession is not necessary for the obtaining of the pardon of our sin;' and Panormitan, the great canonist, professeth that the opinion of Semeca doth much please him, which referreth the original of confession to a general tradition of the Church; 'because,' saith he, 'there is not any clear authority which sheweth that God or Christ did clearly ordain that confession should be made unto a priest.' Yea, 'all the canonists, following their first interpreter, say that confession was brought in only by the law of the Church,' and not by any divine precept, if we will believe Maldonat; who addeth notwithstanding, that 'this opinion is either already sufficiently declared by the Church to be heresy, or that the Church should do well if it did declare it to be heresy.'

"And we find indeed, that in the year of our Lord 1479, which was thirty-four years after the death of Panormitan, by a special commission directed from pope Sixtus the Fourth unto Alfonsus Carillus, Archbishop of Toledo,† one Petrus

\* Michael of Bononia, in the age of Urban VI., must have flourished about the year 1380.

† Alfonsus Carillus, Archbishop of Toledo, presided there from A. D. 1446 to 1483. His character may be seen in Prescott's History of Ferdinand and Isabella.

Oxomensis, professor of divinity in the university of Salamanca, was driven to abjure this conclusion, which he had before delivered as agreeable to the common opinion of the doctors, ‘that confession of sins in particular was grounded upon some statute of the universal Church, and not upon divine right.’ And when learned men for all this would not take warning, but would needs be meddling again with that which the popish clergy could not endure should be touched, (as Johannes de Selva, among others, in the end of his treatise *de Jurejurando*, Erasmus in divers of his works, and Beatus Rhenanus in his argument upon Tertullian’s book *de Pœnitentia*,) the fathers of Trent, within seventy-two years after that, conspired together to stop all men’s mouths with an *anathema*, that should deny sacramental confession to be of divine institution, or to be necessary unto salvation. And so we are come to an end of that point.”—*Answer to a Jesuit*, p. 95.

Bishop Jeremy Taylor, whose Dissuasive from Popery ought to be deeply studied, shall speak next.

“That confession to a priest, is a doctrine taught as necessary in the Church of Rome, is without all question; and yet that it is but the commandment of men, I shall, I hope, clearly enough evince; and if I do, I suppose the charge laid against the Church of Rome, which is the same Christ laid against the Pharisees, will be fully made good, as to this instance; for this is one of the sorts of that crime, to say, ‘Dixit Dominus, Dominus autem non dixit;’ to pretend a rite to be of divine institution when it is not so, but ‘humanum inventum,’ ‘a device of man’s brain.’—The other (which is, still supposing an institution to be human and positive, yet to urge it with the same severe religion, as they do a divine commandment) I shall consider in other instances. For the present the inquiry is concerning *auricular confession*, and its pretended necessity. The first decree concerning it, was in the Lateran council; in which ‘every person of

years of discretion is commanded to confess all his sins to his own priest, at least once in the year ; or to another priest, with the leave of his own ; otherwise while he is living, he must be driven from entrance into the Church ; and when he is dead, he must have no Christian burial.'—This is very severe ; but yet here is no damnation to them that neglect it ; and the duty is not pretended to be by divine commandment : and therefore, lest that severity might seem too much to be laid upon human law, they made it up in the new forge at Trent ; and there it was decreed that, 'To confess all and every mortal sin, which, after diligent inquiry, we remember, and every evil thought or desire, and the circumstances that change the nature of the sin, is necessary for the remission of sins, and of divine institution ; and he that denies this, is to be anathema.'

“Whether to confess to a priest be an advisable discipline, and a good instance, instrument, and ministry of repentance, and may serve many good ends in the Church, and to the souls of needing persons,—is no part of the question. We find, that, in the Acts of the Apostles, divers converted persons came to St. Paul, either publicly or privately, ‘and confessed their deeds ;’ and burnt their books of exorcism, that is, did what became severe and hearty penitents, who needed counsel and comfort, and that their repentance should be conducted by wise guides. And when St. James exhorts all Christians ‘to confess their sins to one another,’ certainly it is more agreeable to all spiritual ends, that this be done rather to the curate of souls, than to the ordinary brethren. The Church of England is no way engaged against it, but advises it, and practises it. The Calvinist churches do not practise it much, because they know not well how to divest it from its evil appendages, which are put to it by the customs of the world, and to which it is too much exposed by the interests, weaknesses, and partialities of men. But they commending it, shew they would use it willingly, if they



could order it unto edification. ‘Interim quin sistant se pastori oves, quoties sacram cœnam participare volunt, adeò non reclamo, ut maximè velim hoc ubique observari.’—And for the Lutheran Churches, that it is their practice, we may see it in Chemnitius, who was one of greatest fame amongst them ; and he is noted to this purpose by Bellarmine ; only they all consent, that it is not necessary nor of divine institution ; and being but of man’s invention, it ought not to pass into a doctrine ; and, as the apostles said in the matter of circumcision, ‘a burden ought not to be put upon the necks of the disciples :’ and that, ‘in lege gratiæ, longè difficillimum’ too, as Major observes truly, by far greater than any burden in the law of grace, the time of the Gospel. Let it be commanded to all, to whom it is needful or profitable ; but let it be free, as to the conscience precisely, and bound but by the cords of a man, and as other ecclesiastical laws are, which are capable of exceptions, restrictions, cautions, dispensations, rescindings, and abolitions, by the same authority, or upon greater reasons.

“The question then is, whether to confess all our greater sins to a priest, all that upon strict inquiry we can remember, be necessary to salvation ? This the Church of Rome now affirms ; and this the Church of England and all Protestant Churches deny ; and complain sadly, that the commandments of men are changed into the doctrines of God, by a Pharisaical empire, and superstition.”—*Dissuasive from Popery*.

Archbishop Bramhall, than whom a higher Church of England man, a more enlightened opposer of Popery, and a more constant supporter at the same time of the Protestant element in our Church, could not be found, writes as follows :—

“What are those corruptions then, which we have ‘pared away’ from the Romish shrift ? First, that they have tricked it up in the robes of a Sacrament, obtruding it upon the world as absolutely necessary to salvation, and that by divine institution ; contrary to their own schools. Gratian



concludes it with, '*Lectoris judicio reservatur.*'—'It is referred to the judgment of the reader;' and cites Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury for his opinion. The Glosser refers the original to an universal tradition; to whose opinion Scotus inclines. Bonaventure saith, that it was 'insinuated by Christ, instituted by the Apostles, and promulged by St. James.' Panormitan makes the original of it human; with whom side Petrus Oxomensis, Erasmus, Rhenanus. And Lyranus,—that in times past it was not so rigidly observed. Secondly, that they have restrained it to a particular and plenary enumeration of all sins. 'Who can tell how oft he offendeth; cleanse Thou me, O Lord, from my secret faults.' But without this, say they, the priest cannot give true judgment. No? Why? Christ said not, '*what* sins ye remit,' but '*whose* sins;' giving this caution to the Presbyters, to attend more to the contrition and capacity of their confitents, than to the number and nature of their sins. Thirdly, they make it to be meritorious at the hands of God, and satisfactory for sins, not by way of complacence only, but even in justice. Thus in the doctrinal part.

"In the practice there are corruptions also, which deserve to be 'pared away;' though this author cannot see to distinguish between the body and the botches, between the institution and the corruptions. As, that they do first absolve a man from his sins, and then bid him to make satisfaction; contrary to the practice of the ancient Church. Then, that it hath been used as a picklock to open the secrets of states and princes. Most certain it is, that many have, and too many daily do, convert it to their own advantage."—*Bramhall's Works, Anglo-Catholic Library, Vol. v. p. 222.*

I would refer also to the whole of Bishop's Bull's Sermon on the Necessity of Works of Righteousness, wherein he not only exposes "the trade of auricular confession," but refutes the Romish doctrine of attrition, which is so closely connected

with it, proving it to be in his own words, "a doctrine so dangerous, so damnable, that it seems itself sufficient to unchristian and unchurch any society of men that shall teach and maintain it." "Indeed," says Bishop Bull, "there is no society of Christians in the world, where antinomianism and libertinism more reign, than among the Papists, into whose very faith they are interwoven, and men are taught them by the definitions of their Church. It is no wonder so many vicious persons, especially when they come to die, turn Papists, and no visitants are so welcome to them as the Roman confessors. They find them very easy and comfortable doctors for men in their desperate case, and admire their rare invention, who have found out a shorter way to heaven, and a readier one to escape hell and damnation, than the Scriptures ever discovered, or their former ministers of the Church of England, following the guidance of the Scriptures, durst warrant to them. And what broken plank, yea what flag or reed will not a drowning man lay hold on? O how pleasant a thing is that which they call the bosom of the Roman Church! how willingly do those forlorn wretches cast themselves into it! where they are promised, and in their own deluded imaginations enjoy, that rest and security, which they could not any where else, no not in the word and promises of God, find. But alas! when they thus say Peace, peace, unto themselves, behold, sudden destruction cometh upon them, and within a minute after they are launched out into eternity, a sad and dreadful experience convinceth them what a sorry refuge they fled to.

"It is evident, that the Church of Rome, in teaching this vile doctrine, aims only at her own interest and advantage, and hath no regard at all to the honour of God and the good of souls. It is absolutely necessary, she saith, for a sinner to make an auricular confession to, and be absolved by, a priest, though God hath no where said so: but it is not necessary for him to be contrite, or to repent of

his sins out of the love of God, though God Himself in His own word hath an hundred times said it is. That is necessary for the honour and gain of the priest. The trade of auricular confession must by any means be kept up, because from thence they reap no small gain; and besides by it they govern, not only the silly common people, but great men, and kings and princes, by becoming masters of their secrets. But is not the doctrine of true contrition as necessary for the honour of God? Yes: but the promoting of God's glory in the salvation of souls is the least of their design or business. Indeed it were easy to shew how the whole frame of the religion and doctrine of the Church of Rome, as it is distinguished from that Christianity which we hold in common with them, is evidently designed and contrived to serve the interest and profit of them that rule that Church, by the disservices, yea and ruin, of those souls that are under their government."—*Bull's Works, Oxford Edition, Vol. i. p. 12.*

Let it be remembered, that the authors here quoted, are men whom the Presbyterianizers in our Church brand as semi-papists, and their words will perhaps come with greater weight to those who, by a just abhorrence of the Presbyterianizing extreme in the Church of England, are inclined to think with too great partiality of the Romanizers.

The necessity of *confessio oris*, (that it is necessary to confess our sins, not only to God, but also to the priest,) was asserted by Thomas Aquinas, in *Supplementiæ*, Part. Quest. 8, Art. 1. Peter Lombard expressed himself more indefinitely on this point; Sent. iv., Dist. 17, Litt. B. The Ecclesiastical Institution of auricular confession was established by the fourth council of the Lateran, under Pope Innocent III. This is the plain history of the doctrine, which is thus seen to be mediæval and Romish, not scriptural and primitive.

I may add that there are, in the Public Library, at Geneva, several volumes of manuscript written in the Vaudois patois, and illustrating the doctrine of those persecuted people who met with such hard measures from the Papal party in the thirteenth and fourteenth century. The following extract is taken from the volume numbered in the Library, 208, p. 78; and is remarkable as furnishing a testimony to the opposition, which the decree of the Fourth Lateran Council encountered at the period of its promulgation. The MS. is apparently of the early part of the fourteenth century; and was copied by a friend who took some pains to decipher it:—

“DE LA PENANZA.

“De la qual Penanza nos tenem por fe e confessem purament de cor, qu’ella es besognuol a lome cagi por sfaczar lo pecca.

“A la qual se dev continuanment amonestar, e amonestem, qu li pecca se confessen segond la forma de la primitiva gleisa, e requerir consells en las besognas a preyres prudent e savi de si. La forma e obligacion introducta novellament d’Ynocent terz, la qual solon husar comunament li preyr simoniach, se dev squivar e fugir d’li fidel: mas li remedis profektivole a dever consellar a li pentent, como son lo dejun, l’oracio, l’almona, e las

“OF PENANCE.

“Concerning which Penance we hold for faith, and confess with sincerity of heart, that it is necessary for every man thus to put away his sin.

“On which, men ought continually to be admonished, and we do admonish, that their sins should be confessed according to the form of the primitive Church, and that they should require counsels in cases of need from priests of prudent character and known to them. The form and ordinance lately introduced by Innocent III., which the simoniacal priests commonly use, ought to be shunned and avoided by the faithful: but



autras obras de satisfacion, nos confessem ess util e profectivo.

the remedies which may be profitably recommended to penitents, such as fasting, prayer, alms-deeds, and other works of satisfaction, we confess to be useful and profitable.

“La Confessio auricular facta tout solament al preyre . . . e la forma e husanza d’l’absolucio, e l . . . d’la penanza en nombre en pes e en mesura, segond la volunta del confessor, costa lo modo husa d’li preyre simoniach, e l’obligacion d’Ynocent terz, no es . . . de substancia, ne de . . . a la vera penanza.”

“Auricular Confession made all alone to the priest, . . . and the form and usage of absolution, and the [injunction] of penance in number, in weight, and in measure, according to the will of the confessor, as is the mode used by the simoniacal priests, and the ordinance of Innocent III., is not of . . . the substance, nor of [the nature] of true penance.”

Here it may be remarked that the writer speaks of the obligation of every Christian to auricular confession as an ordinance of Pope Innocent III., not a decree of the council assembled by him. Which agrees with the account of this council given by Matthew Paris; who says that the several canons were read before the council by the pope’s authority, that some of the Churchmen then present were satisfied with them, others thought them burdensome; but he mentions no voting of the council on the question.

#### NOTE D.

Quotations from St. Chrysostom may be seen in my Sermon on the Visitation of the Sick, in which this subject is alluded to. Other quotations may be seen in Bingham, who ob-



serves :—" Chrysostom is not the only person that maintains this assertion. St. Basil says the same thing before him : 'I do not make confession with my lips, to appear to the world ; but inwardly in my heart, where no eye sees ; I declare my groanings unto Thee alone, Who seest in secret, I roar within myself : for I need not many words to make confession : the groanings of my heart are sufficient for confession, and the lamentations which are sent up to Thee, my God, from the bottom of my soul.' In like manner, St. Hilary makes confession necessary to be made to God only ; for commenting on the fifty-second Psalm, he tells us David teaches us that confession is necessary to be made to none but God, Who hath made the olive fruitful with the hope of mercy for ever and ever. And St. Ambrose as plainly says, that tears poured out before God are sufficient to obtain pardon of sin, without confession made to man. His words are, 'Tears wash away sin, which men are ashamed to confess with their voice. Weeping provides at once both for pardon and bashfulness : tears speak out faults without horror ; tears confess our crimes without any offence to modesty or shamefacedness.' So again, speaking of St. Peter's tears, he says, 'I find not what Peter said, but I find that he wept ; I read of his tears, but I read not of his satisfaction ;' meaning, that verbal confession was not simply necessary to obtain pardon. And in this sense, St. Austin, expounding those words of the Psalmist, 'I said I will pronounce or declare my own wickedness against myself unto the Lord, and so Thou forgavest the iniquity of my heart,' says, he had not yet pronounced it, but only promised that he would pronounce it, and yet God forgave him. He had not yet pronounced it, but only in his heart ; his confession was not yet come to his mouth, yet God heard the voice of his heart : his voice was not yet in his mouth, but the ear of God was in his heart ; which implies, that God accepts and pardons the penitent and contrite heart, even before any form'

declaration is made by vocal confession either to God or man. In another place, he speaks of confession as no ways necessary to be made to man. What have I to do with men, that they should hear my confessions, as though they could heal all my diseases ? He also frequently tells us, with all the rest of the ancient writers, that a great many of those which the Romanists now call mortal sins, were daily pardoned upon no other confession but the fervent and devout use of the Lord's prayer, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.' Which evidently shews, that he did not believe Auricular Confession necessary for expiating all manner of mortal sins. Maximus Taurinensis delivers his opinion almost in the same words as St. Ambrose does : 'Tears wash away sin, which the voice is ashamed to confess. Therefore tears provide at once both for men's modesty and salvation ; they neither make men blush in their petitions, nor disappoint them of pardon in asking.' He adds, 'That tears are a sort of silent prayers ; they ask not pardon in words, and yet deserve it, (that is, in his style, *procure it*) they declare not the cause, and yet obtain mercy. Nay the prayers of tears are many times of more advantage, than those of words ; because words often prove deceitful in prayer, but tears never deceive. For words sometimes declare but half the business ; but tears always express the whole affection.' Prosper, who was St. Austin's scholar, follows his doctrine : for speaking of private sins committed by the clergy, he says, 'They shall more easily appease God, who being not convicted by human judgment, do of their own accord acknowledge their offence ; who either do discover it by their own confessions, or else, others not knowing what they are in secret, do voluntarily inflict the censure of excommunication upon themselves ; and being separated (not in mind, but in office) from the altar, to which they did minister, do lament their life as dead ; assuring themselves, that God being reconciled unto them by the fruits of effectual

repentance, they shall not only receive what they have lost, but also being made citizens of that city which is above, they shall come to everlasting joys.' Cassian also assures us, that this was the doctrine of the Egyptian fathers. For he says, Pinuphius, the Egyptian abbot gave this advice to the monks that were under him : ' Who is it that cannot humbly say, I made my sin known unto Thee, and my iniquity have I not hid ? that by this confession he may confidently adjoin that which follows : And so Thou forgavest the impiety of my heart. But if shamefacedness so draw thee back, that thou blushest to reveal them before men ; cease not by continual supplication to confess them unto Him from Whom they cannot be hid, and to say, I know my iniquity, and my sin is against me alway : to Thee only have I sinned, and done evil before Thee, Whose custom is both to cure without publishing our shame, and to pardon sins without accusing or upbraiding.' These are plain testimonies, evidently shewing, that the ancients did not believe the necessity of Auricular Confession, or urge it as a thing absolutely necessary to absolution and salvation."—*Bingham, Book xviii., Chap. iii. Sec. 2.*

After making some other observations, Bingham sums up the points of difference between the Primitive Church and the modern Church of Rome, on this question, as they are arranged in a treatise of Daillé's, under no fewer than thirty heads. 1. He argues from the practice of all other Churches in the world beside the Roman. The doctrine of the necessity of Auricular Confession is taught by no other denomination of Christians, not the Ethiopians nor the Indians of St. Thomas, nor the Babylonians or Chaldeans, nor the Armenians, nor the Jacobites, nor the Greeks, in the manner of the Romans. 2. He shews, that whereas the priests in the Roman Church are nicely instructed in the business of Auricular Confession, and teach and minister it daily to the people, as the noblest act of their

office ; there is nothing of all this to be found in the genuine writings of the ancient Christians. 3. Whereas Auricular Confession is continually mentioned by the Roman writers among the religious acts of all sorts of men, clergy, monks, laity, princes, private men, noblemen, plebeians, men, women, &c., there is nothing of this among the ancient Christians. 4. In the ancient Church, Christians were bound by no law, as now they are in the Roman, to confess their sins to a priest, before they came to the Lord's table to receive the Eucharist ; which he demonstrates by eight reasons, and the testimony of Chrysostom, Pelagius, Austin, Dorotheus, the council of Chalon and Hinemar. 5. In the Roman Church it is usual for every one to make his Auricular Confession at the point of death ; of which there are no footsteps among the ancients. 6. The Romish writers are very full of Auricular Confession in describing any of the sicknesses, or calamities, or wars, or shipwrecks, or journeys, or other hazardous undertakings of their people : but there was no such practice among the ancients. 7. The ancients in describing the persecutions of the Church, or the conflicts and trials and last agonies of their confessors and martyrs, never mention Auricular Confession, which yet abounds every where in the Romish writers, when they make any such relations of the lives or deaths of their martyrs. 8. The ancients had no solemn times appointed for Auricular Confession, as Easter, Christmas, Lent, the greater festivals, and the Friday and Saturday fasts, which are now every where spoken of in the Romish writers, as solemn times of confession. 9. The ancients say nothing of miracles done in or by confession, which the Romanists continually boasted of. 10. The ancient Pagans never objected Auricular Confession to the primitive Christians, as the modern Pagans do to those of the Roman communion. 11. The ancient Church knew nothing of heretics opposing Auricular Confession, because there was no such thing enjoined ; but since it was appointed



by the council of Lateran, anno 1215, many have been condemned as heretics for opposing it. 12. The primitive bishops often declare, that they were ignorant of the sins of their people; particularly this is said by Chrysostom, Austin, Innocent and Leo, Bishops of Rome: which is an argument, that they were not revealed to them by sacramental confession. 13. The first man that instituted any private confession was St. Anthony, who appointed his monks to write down their thoughts, and communicate them one to another: but this was nothing to sacerdotal confession; for these monks were only laymen. 14. The ancient writers have none of those intricate questions and disputations about Auricular Confession, which so much stuff the books of the modern casuists in the Church of Rome. 15. The Fathers never interpret those passages of Scripture, which the Romanists produce for Auricular Confession, in their sense, but most of them to a contrary meaning. 16. The Fathers, in those books which they wrote professedly of repentance, never urge Auricular Confession as a necessary part of repentance. 17. The Fathers acknowledge only three sorts of repentance; the ante-baptismal, for all manner of sins; the quotidian or daily repentance, for lesser sins of daily incursion; and the public penance of lapsers, falling into more heinous sins; but Auricular Confession appertains to none of these. 18. Gregory Nyssen says expressly, there were some sins, such as covetousness, which the Fathers before him endeavoured to cure, not by any canonical punishments, but only by the public exhortations of the word and doctrine: which will not consist with the doctrine of Auricular Confession. 19. Nectarius wholly abrogated the office of the penitentiary priest; which argues that there was no necessity of Auricular Confession: . . . . . 20. His next argument is drawn from those passages of Chrysostom, Hilary, Basil, Ambrose, Maximus, Taurinensis, and St. Austin, . . . . . asserting, that remission of sins may be ob-



tained of God by contrition only, without any oral confession.

21. The Fathers allow salvation to be attainable even by those relapsers, who fell again into sin after their first public penance, though they had no liberty either to make confession or receive absolution. His 22nd, 23rd, and 24th arguments are drawn from the testimonies of Cassian, and Julianus Pomerius or Prosper, and Laurentius Novariensis.

25. To these, he adds two considerable testimonies of Bede.

26. And the concessions of Erasmus, Beatus Rhenanus, and Rigaltius, who freely own that the Romish Auricular Confession was not in use in the Primitive Church. He shews that there was a change made of the ancient discipline in the ninth age, when private penance enjoined by the priest began to be pretty frequent and common.

28. And yet this differed vastly in many particulars from the confession established afterwards in the council of Lateran. For still it was believed that confession made to God was sufficient to salvation.

29. In the following ages also Goffridus Vindocinensis, Peter Lombard, and Gratian, say there were many who still held, that confession to God alone was sufficient without confessing to the priest. And Gratian particularly, having cited the authorities on both sides of the question, leaves it to the judgment of the reader to take which he pleases: because each opinion had wise and religious men to authorize and defend it. Which argues, that in Gratian's time, the question about the necessity of Auricular Confession was not so determined as it was afterwards in the council of Lateran, and the council of Trent. This is also acknowledged by Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Antonine, who say, that in the time of Gratian and Lombard the question about the necessity of such confession was only problematical, and what might safely be disputed both ways, and that it was no heresy to deny it: but after the determination of the Church made under Innocent III. in the Lateran council, it was to be reputed heresy for any man to assert, that it was sufficient to confess a man's

sins to God, without making confession to a priest also. 30. Thus the doctrine of Auricular Confession was established in the thirteenth century, and not before; and even after that there wanted not witnesses, such as Wickliff and Huss, and Semeca, and Michael of Bononia, and Petrus Oxoniensis, to bear testimony against its novelty, to the time of the Reformation. This is the short account of those thirty arguments, which the learned Mr. Daillé uses to shew the novelty of the Romish doctrine concerning Auricular Confession, which the curious reader, who desires to see them more fully deduced and confirmed, may consult in our author's elaborate work, for his farther satisfaction."—*Bingham, book xviii., chap. iii., sec. 4.*

#### NOTE E.

The word Protestant is antagonistic to the word Popish. It was a crafty device to make it stand opposed to the word Catholic. The following observations are from the Quarterly Review, vol. lxix, and have been generally attributed to Mr. Sewell.

"Though the Bible had been abused by the licentiousness of private interpretation, they never omitted the opportunity of magnifying it, *in its true interpretation*, as 'the only infallible rule of faith;' as 'containing all the principles of faith and points of salvation,' as needing no associate, no addition of any authority as equally infallible, nor more perspicuous than itself to supply what it wants.' Though the service of the Church was threatened to be stripped of all decency and order, they speak soberly and cautiously of ceremonies. Though Episcopacy was made a badge of Antichrist, they do not reduce all religion to a matter of Church discipline. Though the doctrine of faith had been perverted to the wildest excesses, there is no mention in them of justification by works, or of works at all, without

immediate and solemn reference to the faith which alone can sanctify them. These points, and many others of their doctrinal teaching, might be advantageously examined. For much of this caution and comprehensiveness of view they were undoubtedly indebted to the proximity of Popery, and to their thorough acquaintance with its nature, and dread of its poison. Yet apparently they had more to fear from Puritanism than from Popery; and if we in this day might be reluctant to retain the name of Protestant, from the fear of being confounded with sectarians, much more might they. And yet, Catholic as they were both in language and in spirit, they use it boldly and prominently. As the believing Jews, when other Jews refused to believe, were compelled to distinguish themselves as Christians; and as the Christian Church, when heretics also called themselves Christians, was compelled to add the name of Catholic; so Catholic Christians, when one great branch of the Church, retaining the same title, is spreading the grossest errors, must distinguish themselves as Protestants. They are Protestant, as the 'Latin or West Church' (so Field has proved,) 'wherein the Pope tyrannised before Luther's time, was and continued a true Protestant Church, condemning those profane and superstitious abuses which we have removed; and groaning under that tyranny, the yoke whereof we have now cast off.' They are Protestants, as the Church Catholic itself is Protestant against the sins and follies of heathenism; as every Christian in every age and every country is appointed by God himself to be a witness and protester against evil. If, indeed, the acts we rebuke are no sins, then to protest is a crime. If they are sins, yet sins of the past, now buried and forgotten, to rake them up unnecessarily may well be condemned. If we judge them by our own private judgment, we intrude on the rights of our superiors, and so we sin. And if they be distant and weak, and no danger exists of infection, we may

well spare ourselves and others the pain of declaring against them. But whether the deeds of Popery be sins or not—whether they be dead and buried, or alive and in full vigour—whether our Church has spoken on them, and we are bound to speak with her voice—whether in the silence and debility of the Church Catholic she was not bound to speak, when no other voice could speak so strongly—and whether there is not danger from Popery now in the very heart of the country; danger, which calls on us all to rouse the weak and the strong together to vigilance against their greatest enemy—unhappily need not be asked. We are not, and dare not be, Protestants, in the sense which some few may wrongly affix to the word, as discarding all guides to truth but our own self-will: in this sense Protestantism is worse than folly: it may be worse than Popery: but as remonstrating and warning all around us against the corruptions of Popery, we cannot cease to be Protestants, without ceasing to do our duty as Christians. It is our glory and our happiness to be Christians—our safeguard and consolation to be Catholics—our sad and melancholy duty, a duty which we never can abandon till Rome has ceased to work among us, to be Protestants.

“‘My Lords,’ said Laud, ‘I am as innocent in this business of religion, as free from all practice, or so much as thought of practice, for any alteration to Popery, or any way blemishing the true Protestant religion established in the Church of England, as I was when my mother first bare me into the world.

“‘If I had blemished the true Protestant religion’—‘The number of those persons whom, by God’s blessing upon my labours, I have settled in the true Protestant religion established in the Church of England’—‘I pray God, His truth (the true Protestant religion here established) sink not’—‘God of His mercy preserve the true Protestant religion amongst us’—



‘ This was the common language of Laud, the martyr of the Puritans.

“So Bramhall, while rightly denying that ‘ Protestancy is of the essence of the Church,’ any more than the weeding of a garden is the essence of the garden, does not scruple throughout the whole of the same treatise to use the word as the right denomination of men, whom he describes in the same place as ‘endeavouring to conform themselves in all things to the pattern of the Primitive Church,’ as ‘ready to shed their blood for the least particle of saving truth.’

“So Hammond, speaking of those who preached resistance to the lawful magistrate :—

“‘ Such as these, if they must be called Protestants, are yet in this somewhat more than that title ever imported, I may say, perfect Jesuits in their principles.’—‘This doctrine [of non-resistance] purely Protestant,’—the contrary of which, ‘by God’s providence, hath formerly been timeously restrained, and not broken out to the defaming of our Protestant profession.’

“So Nicholson :—

‘The laws are now silent, and any man may be now anything, so he be not an old Protestant of the Church of England.’

“So Sanderson is not afraid to say—

‘When we have wrangled ourselves as long as our wits and strength will serve us, the honest, downright, sober English Protestant will be found in the end the man in the safest way, and by the surest line.’

“Nor is he ashamed to avow his

‘zeal for the safety and honour of my dear mother, the Church of England, which hath nourished me up to become a Christian and a Protestant (that is to say, a *pure pite* Christian, without any other addition or epithet.)

“‘ Protestants,’ says Laud, ‘did not get that name by protesting against the Church of Rome, but by protesting



(and that when nothing else would serve) against her errors and superstitions. Do you but remove them from the Church of Rome, and our protestation is ended, and the separation too. Nor is protestation itself such an unheard-of thing in the very heart of religion. For the sacraments, both of the Old and New Testament, are called by your own school 'visible signs protesting the faith.' Now, if the sacraments be protestantia, signs protesting, why may not men also, and without all offence, be called Protestants, since by receiving the true sacraments, and by refusing them which are corrupted, they do but protest the sincerity of their faith against that doctrinal corruption which hath invaded the great sacrament of the Eucharist and other parts of religion? especially since they are 'men which must protest their faith by visible signs and sacraments.'

"'They are the Protestants,' says Stillingfleet, 'who stand for the ancient and undefiled doctrine of the Catholic Church against the novel and corrupt tenets of the Roman Church. And such kind of protestation no true Christian, who measures his being Catholic by better grounds than communion with the Church of Rome, will ever have cause to be ashamed of.'

"So Hickes, though fully alive to the 'wicked, absurd, and unchristian doctrines, which atheistical, heretical, and other seducing teachers taught in his day, under the name of Protestants,' does not therefore repudiate the name, but declares that 'the Protestant religion of the Church of England is but another name for primitive Christianity, and a Protestant for a primitive Christian, who protests against all the corruptions of the Gospel by Popery.'

"We may not indeed distinguish ourselves solely as Protestants, or without express declarations of Catholic principles, especially where the name is likely to confound us with sects, and doctrines, which a Catholic Christian repudiates. The word has been used too carelessly, and a false

meaning popularly given to it, which must be condemned and corrected. But as yet, while no other badge exists to mark to the world, and especially to the poor and the weak, the duty of guarding against Popery, instead of dallying with its temptations, and palliating its corruptions, we cannot prescribe it. It is a sign—a little sign, but one most looked to—by which a large number of Christian minds within the Church, in a time of natural alarm and jealousy, test our attachment to the Church, and our repudiation of errors which they have been taught—and taught most rightly—to regard with dread. For their sakes we are bound to be sparing of our own liberty, and tender of their consciences. If a French army is closely besieging a town in which we live, we have no right to dress ourselves up as French soldiers and walk about the streets, or to refuse to give our English pass-word, though by this refusal we may alarm none but women and children. We have no right to alarm any one. He who really desires the restoration of Christian unity will desire, most of all, to recall to the fold of the Church her own sheep. If he dreads to offend Papists by the word Popery, he will dread to offend Puritans by rejecting the word Protestant. If he fears that it will confound him with dissenters, he must fear alike lest the word Catholic should confound him with Popery—unless, indeed, he be wholly insensible to the evils of Popery, while keenly alive to the evils of Puritanism—unless the presence of Church government in the one is to cloak over all errors of doctrine, while the neglect of it in the other is to blot out all truth of doctrine—unless Popery in his sight be only holy, and Puritanism only sinful—unless he close his eyes to all the wickedness which the one has essentially produced, and to all the goodness with which the other has been accompanied—such as earnestness, energy, personal piety, study of the Scripture, prayer, self-denial, charity, zeal for what it believes to be

truth, jealousy of all that seems to trench on the supremacy of God, or to substitute the creature for the Creator.”—

#### NOTE F.

“Be it therefore known unto him, (the Jesuit) that no kind of Confession, either public or private, is disallowed by us, that is any way requisite for the due execution of that ancient power of the keys which Christ bestowed upon his Church. The thing which we reject is that new picklock of sacramental confession, obtruded upon men’s consciences, as a matter necessary to salvation, by the canons of the late conventicle of Trent, where those good Fathers put their curse upon every one that either shall ‘deny that sacramental confession was ordained by divine right, and is by the same right necessary to salvation;’ or shall ‘affirm that in the sacrament of penance it is not by the ordinance of God necessary, for the obtaining of the remission of sins, to confess all and every one of those mortal sins, the memory whereof by due and diligent premeditation may be had, even such as are hidden, and be against the two last commandments of the decalogue, together with the circumstances which change the kind of the sin; but that this confession is only profitable to instruct and comfort the penitent, and was anciently observed only for the imposing of canonical satisfaction.’ This doctrine, I say, we cannot but reject, as being repugnant to that which we have learned both from the Scriptures and from the Fathers.

“For in the Scriptures we find, that the confession which the penitent sinner maketh to God alone, hath the promise of forgiveness annexed unto it, which no priest upon earth hath power to make void upon pretence that himself or some of his fellows were not first particularly acquainted with the business : *I acknowledged my sin unto*

*Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid ; I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* And lest we should think that this was some peculiar privilege vouchsafed to the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, the same sweet psalmist of Israel doth presently enlarge his note, and inferreth this general conclusion thereupon : *For this shall every one that is godly pray unto Thee in a time when Thou mayest be found.* King Solomon, in his prayer for the people at the dedication of the temple, treadeth just in his father's step. If they turn, saith he, and pray unto Thee in the land of their captivity, saying, *We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly ; if they return to Thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, &c., forgive Thy people which have sinned against Thee all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against Thee.* And the poor publican, putting up his supplication in the temple accordingly, *God be merciful to me a sinner,* went back to his house justified, without making confession to any other ghostly father, but only the *Father of spirits* ; of Whom St. John giveth us this assurance, that *if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Which promise, that it appertained to such as did confess their sins unto God, the ancient Fathers were so well assured of, that they cast in a manner all upon this confession, and left little or nothing to that which was made unto man. Nay, they do not only leave it free for men to confess or not confess their sins unto others, which is the most that we could have ; but some of them also seem, in words at least, to advise men not to do it at all, which is more than we seek for.

“St. Chrysostom, of all others, is most copious in this argument, some of whose passages to this purpose I will here lay down : ‘It is not necessary,’ saith he, ‘that thou



shouldest confess in the presence of witnesses: let the enquiry of thy offences be made in thy thought; let this judgment be without a witness; let God only see thee confessing.' 'Therefore I intreat and beseech and pray you, that you would continually make your confession to God. For I do not bring thee into the theatre of thy fellow-servants, neither do I constrain thee to discover thy sins unto men: unclasp thy conscience before God, and shew thy wounds unto Him, and of Him ask a medicine. Shew them to Him that will not reproach, but heal thee. For although thou hold thy peace, He knoweth all.' 'Let us not call ourselves sinners only, but let us recount our sins, and repeat every one of them in special. I do not say unto thee, Bring thyself upon the stage, nor, Accuse thyself unto others; but I counsel thee to obey the prophet, saying, *Reveal thy way unto the Lord*. Confess them before God, confess thy sins before the Judge, praying, if not with thy tongue, yet at least with thy memory; and so look to obtain mercy.' 'But thou art ashamed to say that thou hast sinned. Confess thy faults then daily in thy prayer. For do I say, Confess them to thy fellow-servant, who may reproach thee therewith? Confess them to God, Who healeth them. For, although thou confess them not at all, God is not ignorant of them.' 'Wherefore then, tell me, art thou ashamed and blushest to confess thy sins? For dost thou discover them to a man, that he may reproach thee? Dost thou confess them to thy fellow-servant, that he may bring thee upon the stage? To Him Who is thy Lord, Who hath care of thee, Who is kind, Who is thy Physician, thou shewest thy wound.' 'I constrain thee not, saith God, to go into the midst of the theatre, and to make many witnesses of the matter. Confess thy sins to Me alone in private, that I may heal thy sore, and free thee from grief.' 'And this is not only wonderful, that He forgiveth us our sins, but that He



neither discovereth them, nor maketh them open and manifest, nor constraineth us to come forth in public, and disclose our misdemeanours ; but commandeth us to give an account thereof unto Him alone, and unto Him to make confession of them.'

"Neither doth St. Chrysostom here walk alone. That saying of St. Augustine is to the same effect : 'What have I to do with men, that they should hear my confessions, as though they should heal all my diseases?' And that collection of St. Hilary upon the two last verses of the 52nd Psalm, that David there teacheth us 'to confess to no other,' but unto the Lord, 'Who hath made the olive fruitful with the mercy of hope (or, the hope of mercy) for ever and ever.' And that advice of Pinuphius, the Egyptian abbot, which I find also inserted among the canons, collected for the use of the Church of England, in the time of the Saxons, under the title, *De Pœnitentia soli Deo confitenda* : 'Who is it that cannot humbly say, *I made my sin known unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid*, that by this confession he may confidently adjoin that which followeth : *And Thou forgavest the impiety of my heart ?* But if shamefacedness do so draw thee back that thou blushest to reveal them before men, cease not by continual supplication to confess them unto Him from Whom they cannot be hid, and to say, *I know mine iniquity, and my sin is against me alway ; to Thee only have I sinned, and done evil before Thee*, Whose custom is, both to cure without the publishing of any shame, and to forgive sins without upbraiding.' St. Augustine, Cassiodore, and Gregory, make a further observation upon that place of the 32nd Psalm : *I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin ;* that God, upon the only promise and purpose of making this confession, did forgive the sin. 'Mark,' saith Gregory, 'how great the swiftness is of this

vital indulgence, how great the commendation is of God's mercy, that pardon should accompany the very desire of him that is about to confess, before that repentance do come to afflict him; and remission should come to the heart, before that confession did break forth by the voice.' So St. Basil, upon those other words of the Psalmist, *I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart*, (Psalm xxxviii. 8,) maketh this paraphrase: 'I do not confess with my lips, that I may manifest myself unto many; but inwardly in my very heart, shutting mine eyes, to Thee alone Who seest the things that are in secret, do I shew my groans, roaring within myself. For the groans of my heart sufficed for a confession, and the lamentations sent to Thee my God from the depth of my soul.'

"And as St. Basil maketh the groans of the heart to be a sufficient confession, so doth St. Ambrose the tears of the penitent. 'Tears,' saith he, 'do wash the sin, which the voice is ashamed to confess. Weeping doth provide both for pardon and for shamefacedness: tears do speak our fault without horror; tears do confess our crime without offence of our shamefacedness.' From whence he that glosseth upon Gratian, who hath inserted these words of St. Ambrose into his collection of the Decrees, doth infer, that 'if for shame a man will not confess, tears alone do blot out his sin.' Maximus Taurinensis followeth St. Ambrose herein, almost *verbatim*. 'The tear,' saith he, 'washeth the sin, which the voice is ashamed to confess. Tears therefore do equally provide both for our shamefacedness and for our health: they neither blush in asking, and they obtain in requesting.' Lastly, Prosper, speaking of sins committed by such as are in the ministry, writeth thus: 'They shall more easily appease God, who being not convicted by human judgment, do of their own accord acknowledge their offence; who either do discover it by their own confessions, or, others not knowing what they are in secret,

do themselves give sentence of voluntary excommunication upon themselves ; and being separated (not in mind, but in office) from the altar to which they did minister, do lament their life as dead, assuring themselves, that God being reconciled unto them by the fruits of effectual repentance, they shall not only receive what they have lost, but also, being made citizens of that city which is above, they shall come to everlasting joys.' By this it appeareth, that the ancient Fathers did not think that the remission of sins was so tied unto external confession, that a man might not look for salvation from God, if he concealed his faults from man ; but that inward contrition, and confession made to God alone, were sufficient in this case. Otherwise, neither they nor we do debar men from opening their grievances unto the physicians of their souls, either for their better information in the true state of their disease, or for the quieting of their troubled consciences, or for receiving further direction from them out of God's word, both for the recovery of their present sickness, and for the prevention of the like danger in time to come.

“ ‘ If I shall sin, although it be in any small offence, and my thought do consume me, and accuse me, saying, Why hast thou sinned ? what shall I do ? ’ said a brother once to abbot Arsenius. The old man answered, ‘ Whatsoever hour a man shall fall into a fault, and shall say from his heart, Lord God, I have sinned, grant me pardon, that consumption of thought or heaviness shall cease forthwith.’ And it was as good a remedy as could be prescribed for a green wound, to take it in hand presently, to present it to the view of our heavenly Physician, to prevent Satan by taking his office, as it were, out of his hand, and accusing ourselves first, that we may be justified. But when it is not taken in time, but suffered to fester and rankle, the cure will not now prove to be so easy ; it being found true by often experience, that the wounded conscience

will still pinch grievously, notwithstanding the confession made unto God in secret. At such a time as this then where the sinner can find no ease at home, what should he do but use the best means he can to find it abroad? *Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there?* No doubt but God hath provided both the one and the other for *recovering of the health of the daughter of His people*; and St. James hath herein given us this direction: *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed.* According to which prescription, Gregory Nyssen, towards the end of his sermon of repentance, useth this exhortation to the sinner: ‘Be sensible of the disease wherewith thou art taken, afflict thyself as much as thou canst. Seek also the mourning of thy entirely affected brethren to help thee unto liberty. Shew me thy bitter and abundant tears, that I may also mingle mine therewith. Take likewise the priest for a partner of thine affliction, as thy Father. For who is it that so falsely obtaineth the name of a father, or hath so adamantine a soul, that he will not condole with his son’s lamenting? Shew unto him without blushing the things that were kept close; discover the secrets of thy soul, as shewing thy hidden disease unto thy physician. He will have care both of thy credit and of thy cure.’

“It was no part of his meaning to advise us that we should open ourselves in this manner unto every hedge-priest; as if there were a virtue generally annexed to the order, that upon confession made, and absolution received from any of that rank, all should be straight made up; but he would have us communicate our case both to such Christian brethren, and to such a ghostly father, as had skill in physic of this kind, and out of a fellow-feeling of our grief would apply themselves to our recovery. Therefore, saith Origen, ‘look about thee diligently unto whom thou oughtest to confess thy sin. Try first the physician, unto whom thou oughtest to declare



the cause of thy malady, who knoweth to be weak with him that is weak, to weep with him that weepeth, who understandeth the discipline of condoling and compassionating ; that so at length, if he shall say any thing, who hath first shewed himself to be both a skilful physician and a merciful, or if he shall give any counsel, thou mayest do and follow it.' For, as St. Basil well noteth, 'the very same course is to be held in the confession of sins, which is in the opening of the diseases of the body. As men therefore do not discover the diseases of their body to all, nor to every sort of people, but to those that are skilful in the cure thereof ; even so ought the confession of our sins to be made unto such as are able to cure them, according to that which is written, *Ye that are strong bear the infirmities of the weak*, that is, take them away by your diligence.' He requireth care and diligence in performance of the cure : being ignorant, good man, of that new compendious method of healing, invented by our Roman Paracelsians, whereby a man 'in confession of attrite is made contrite by virtue of the keys ;' that the sinner need put his ghostly father to no further trouble than this, *Speak the word only, and I shall be healed*. And this is that sacramental confession devised of late by the priests of Rome ; which they notwithstanding would fain father upon St. Peter, from whom the Church of Rome, as they would have us believe, received this instruction : 'that if envy, or infidelity, or any other evil did secretly creep into any man's heart, he who had care of his own soul should not be ashamed to confess those things unto him who had the oversight over him ; that by God's word and wholesome counsel he might be cured by him.' And so indeed we read in the apocryphal Epistle of Clement, pretended to be written to St. James, the brother of our Lord ; where in the several editions of Crab, Sichardus, Venradius, Surius, Nicholinus, and Binius, we find this note also laid down in the margin : *Nota de confessione sacramentali*,



‘Mark this of sacramental confession.’ But their own Maldonat would have taught them that this note was not worth the marking: forasmuch as the proper end of sacramental confession is the obtaining of remission of sins by virtue of the keys of the Church; whereas the end of the confession here said to be commended by St. Peter, was the obtaining of counsel out of God’s word for the remedy of sins. Which kind of medicinal confession we well approve of, and acknowledge to have been ordinarily prescribed by the ancient Fathers for the cure of secret sins.”—*Archbishop Usher’s Answer to a Jesuit*, p. 75.

Archbishop Usher is supposed by some to have been a Presbyterianizer, but this is hardly consistent with his being a friend of Archbishop Laud.

In vol. xv. of his works, published by Dr. Elrington, there is a letter (cxc.) to the Most Rev. William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury, in which, 1. he excuses himself for not having sooner congratulated him on his promotion to Canterbury; which he there does with all the warmth of a sincere friend and admirer. ‘I may truly say thus much for myself,’ writes Usher, ‘that since the time I received the letter you wrote me the day before you began your journey into Scotland, no day hath passed hitherto wherein I have not made particular mention of you in my prayers unto Almighty God, Who both graciously heard my request, and granted therein as much as my heart could desire.’

But further, the high opinion which he entertained of Archbishop Laud, induced him to exert all the interest he possessed, to secure his appointment to the Chancellorship of the University of Dublin. The following are the words of Usher to Laud, in the same letter: ‘By the death of your predecessor, our university of Dublin was left to seek a new chancellor, whom I advised to pitch upon no other but yourself; which they did with all readiness and alacrity. If your Grace will deign to receive that poor

society under the shadow of your wings, you shall put a further tie of observance, not upon that only, but upon me also, who had my whole breeding there.' This letter not being so quickly responded to as Usher had expected, he wrote a second letter to Laud, urging upon him the necessity of taking this high office upon him.

During Usher's residence in Wales, a book was published under his name, by Mr. Downham, entitled 'A Body of Divinity; or the Sum and Substance of the Christian Religion.' Of this Body many editions have been published, and on the credit of its contents, a character has been made for, and fixed upon Archbishop Usher, most singularly at variance with his true one. Although the book was disowned by him and declared 'to be in divers places deponant from his judgment,' and 'could not by any means be owned by him;' yet edition after edition of this work has been published by those who were aware of the primate's disavowal and disapproval of the work: and every advocate of Supralapsarian doctrines, quotes in his support, the opinions of Archbishop Usher, as put forth in this 'his Body of Divinity'! The letter to the editor disavowing the work is as follows:—

"SIR,—You may be pleased to take notice that the Catechism you write of *is none of mine*: but transcribed out of Mr. Cartwright's catechism, and Mr. Crooks and some other English divines, but drawn together in one method as a kind of common-place book, where other men's judgments and reasons are strongly laid down, though not approved in all places by the collector: besides that, the collection (such as it is) being lent abroad to divers, in scattered sheets, hath for a great part of it, miscarried; the one half of it (I suppose) well-nigh, being no way to be recovered, *so that so imperfect a thing, copied verbatim out of others, and in divers places dissonant from my own judgment, may not by any means be owned by me.* But if it shall seem good to

any industrious person to cut off what is weak and superfluous therein, and supply the wants thereof, and cast it into a new mould of his own framing, I shall be very well content that he make what use he pleaseth of any of the materials therein, and set out the whole in his own name; and this is the resolution of

“Your most assured loving friend,

“May 13th, 1645.

“JA. ARMACHANUS.”

As some persons have expressed their disappointment that Dr. Elrington has not published “the Body of Divinity” among the works of the Archbishop, that learned divine remarks: “Had the authorship been a matter of doubtful evidence, there might be a plausible ground for that complaint, but there can be none for not publishing among the works of Archbishop Usher what Archbishop Usher declared was not his.”

The Calvinistic and Supralapsarian character which has so long and so gratuitously been given to Archbishop Usher, (built on the supposition that this work was his,) vanishes as untrue, made for him, and assigned to him for party purposes.

This digressive vindication of an eminent divine will be pardoned by all who know the intrinsic value of Usher’s writings. At the same time it will be observed that the importance of the citations from his Answer to the Jesuit, consists in the many quotations he has produced from the Fathers, and in the reference to historical facts, which his unquestioned learning enabled him to make.

#### NOTE G.

It is added, “Then, *if he humbly and heartily desire it*,” but only then, “the priest shall absolve him.”

“As for the ministerial sentence of private absolution,”

says Hooker, "it can be no more than a declaration what God hath done ; it hath but the force of the prophet Nathan's absolution, *God hath taken away thy sin* : than which construction, especially of words judicial, there is not any thing more vulgar. For example, the publicans are said in the Gospel to have justified God ; the Jews in Malachi to have blessed proud men, which sin and prosper ; not that the one did make God righteous, or the other the wicked happy ; but to bless, to justify, and to absolve, are as commonly used for words of judgment, or declaration, as of true and real efficacy ; yea, even by the opinion of the Master of Sentences. It may be soundly affirmed and thought that God alone doth remit and retain sins, although He have given power to the Church to do both ; but He one way, and the Church another. He only by Himself forgiveth sin, Who cleanseth the soul from inward blemish, and looseth the debt of eternal death. So great a privilege He hath not given unto His priests, who notwithstanding are authorized to loose and bind, that is to say, declare who are bound, and who are loosed. For albeit a man be already cleared before God, yet he is not in the Church of God so taken, but by the virtue of the priest's sentence ; who likewise may be said to bind by imposing satisfaction, and to loose by admitting to the holy communion.

"Saint Hierom also, whom the master of the sentences allegeth for more countenance of his own opinion, doth no less plainly and directly affirm ; *That as the priests of the law could only discern, and neither cause nor remove leprosy ; so the ministers of the gospel, when they retain or remit sin, do but in the one judge how long we continue guilty, and in the other declare when we are clear or free.* For there is nothing more apparent, than that the discipline of repentance, both public and private was ordained as an outward means to bring men to the virtue of inward conversion : so that when this by manifest tokens did seem effected, absolution ensuing (which could not make) served only



to declare men innocent.”—*Hooker, book vi., on the Absolution of Penitents.*

There is indeed a difference to be marked between the notion of absolution in the Church of Rome and that entertained by the Church of England. In the Church of Rome, absolution is regarded as a judicial act; but by the Church of England it is held to be declaratory only. “Absolution, the Papists say, declareth indeed, but this is not all, for it likewise maketh innocent; which addition being an untruth proved, our truth granted hath, I hope, sufficiency without it, and consequently our opinion therein neither to be challenged as untrue, nor as insufficient.”—*Hooker, book vi. p. 95.*

Absolution is, in truth, nothing more than a verbal and authoritative application to individual persons of the great doctrine of Justification by Faith.

We are sinners. Because of our sins we are justly afraid to participate in the sacred ordinances of the Church, to receive the sacrament of the Lord’s supper, or in any way to draw near to the throne of glory and of grace. But we, though sinners, believe in Jesus Christ; our faith is counted for righteousness; and, being thus *justified* sinners, we do, as being in Christ, what out of Christ we should not dare to do, we join with angels and archangels, and all the host of heaven, in offering our sacrifice of prayer and praise.

How beautifully is this carried out at the commencement of our morning and evening service; an addition to the Prayer Book made by the reformers. We first confess our sins to God: and as much as say, we are unworthy to take part in this service: then the ambassador of the King of kings rises in his place, and in pronouncing the Absolution, says in effect: “Ye are, as ye have confessed, sinners, and, as such, unfit to approach God: nevertheless, if ye truly repent, and unfeignedly believe the Holy Gospel, I have authority to pronounce you to be in a state of justification,



and as Christian men, men to whom faith is imputed for righteousness, you may unite with the holy ones of God, in this sacred and pleasant exercise."

The same meaning is to be attached to the confession and absolution in the office for the holy communion ; the absolution being the form by which this fundamental truth is brought to bear upon our souls.

When the Church, at the Reformation, restored us to our Christian liberty, and no longer required us to make a special confession of sins to the priest, she directed the absolution to be pronounced every day upon those who desire to receive it. She permits it also to be pronounced upon the sick, because they cannot attend the public administration of the ordinance. Will any one say, if this be so, if it is our contrition which is accepted by God for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, the absolution is a work of supererogation ? Let us see. Suppose you had been a traitor to your country, and that you were dwelling in a foreign land ; suppose also, that you had repented of your sin and that proof of your repentance had been conveyed to your sovereign ; suppose, moreover, that from the general expressions used by your injured sovereign, you felt sure that he would receive you again into favour : would you not, nevertheless, feel it satisfactory, before returning to your country, to have some formal writ made out and duly signed by the ambassador of your sovereign residing in the strange country in which you had taken up your abode ? However certain you might feel of the favour of your sovereign, still you would think it expedient to have your pardon, signed and sealed with the customary forms : you would not feel grateful to the ambassador, your gratitude would flow entirely to the sovereign his master ; the act of the ambassador would be merely ministerial, but of his ministerial services you would avail yourself. If the ambassador were to refuse to act, he would be punished, and his evil deed would not damage you

but you would feel, if he were prepared to act, that your reception by your sovereign would not be what you would desire it to be, were you to despise the regulations he has made ; and you would seek from his ambassador a certificate, or such documents as might be legally necessary.

I shall conclude this note with another quotation from the judicious Hooker.

“ It standeth with us in the Church of England, as touching public confession, thus :

“ First, seeing day by day we in our Church begin our public prayers to Almighty God with public acknowledgment of our sins, in which confession every man, prostrate as it were before His glorious Majesty, crieth against himself, and the minister with one sentence pronounceth universally all clear whose acknowledgment so made hath proceeded from a true penitent mind ; what reason is there every man should not, under the general terms of confession, represent to himself his own particulars whatsoever, and adjoining thereunto that affection which a contrite spirit worketh, embrace to as full effect the words of divine grace, as if the same were severally and particularly uttered with addition of prayers, imposition of hands, or all the ceremonies and solemnities that might be used for the strengthening of men’s affiance in God’s peculiar mercy towards them ? Such complements are helps to support our weakness, and not causes that serve to procure or produce His gifts, as David speaketh. The difference of general and particular forms in confession and absolution is not so material that any man’s safety or ghostly good should depend upon it. And for private confession and absolution it standeth thus with us :

“ The minister’s power to absolve is publicly taught and professed, the Church not denied to have authority either of abridging or enlarging the use and exercise of that power ; upon the people no such necessity imposed of opening their transgression unto men, as if remission of sins otherwise

were impossible ; neither any such opinion had of the thing itself, as though it were unlawful or unprofitable, save only for these inconveniences which the world hath by experience observed in it heretofore. And in regard thereof, the Church of England hath hitherto thought it the safer way to refer men's hidden crimes unto God and themselves only ; howbeit, not without special caution for the admonition of such as come to the holy sacrament, and for the comfort of such as are ready to depart the world. First, because there are but few that consider how much that part of divine service, which consists in partaking the holy eucharist, doth import their souls ; what they lose by neglect thereof, and what by devout practice they might attain unto : therefore, lest carelessness of general confession should, as commonly it doth, extinguish all remorse of men's particular enormous crimes, our custom (whensoever men present themselves at the Lord's table) is, solemnly to give themselves fearful admonition, what woes are perpendicularly hanging over the heads of such as dare adventure to put forth their unworthy hands to those admirable mysteries of life, which have by rare examples been proved conduits of irremediable death to impenitent receivers ; whom therefore, as we repel being known, so being not known we cannot but terrify. Yet, with us, the ministers of God's most holy word and sacraments, being all put in trust with the custody and dispensation of those mysteries wherein our communion is, and hath been ever, accounted the highest grace that men on earth are admitted unto, have therefore all equally the same power to withhold that sacred mystical food from notorious evil-livers, from such as have any way wronged their neighbours, and from parties between whom there doth open hatred and malice appear, till the first sort have reformed their wicked lives, the second recompensed them unto whom they were injurious, and the last condescended unto some course of Christian reconciliation, whereupon their mutual accord may ensue. In which cases, for

the first branch of wicked life, and the last, which is open enmity, there can arise no great difficulty about the exercise of his power : in the second, concerning wrongs, they may, if men shall presume to define or measure injuries according to their own conceits, be depraved oftentimes as well by error as partiality, and that no less to the minister himself, than in another of the people under him.

“The knowledge therefore which he taketh of wrongs must rise, as it doth in the other two, not from his own opinion or conscience, but from the evidence of the fact which is committed ; yea, from such evidence as neither doth admit denial nor defence. For if the offender, having either colour of law to uphold, or any other pretence to excuse his own uncharitable and wrongful dealings, shall wilfully stand in defence thereof, it serveth as bar to the power of this kind. Because (as it is observed by men of very good judgment in these affairs) although in this sort our separating of them be not to strike them with the mortal wound of excommunication, but to stay them rather from running desperately headlong into their own harm ; yet it is not in us to sever from the holy communion but such as are either found culpable by their own confession, or have been convicted in [some public,] secular, or ecclesiastical court. For, who is he that dares take upon him to be any man’s both accuser and judge ? Evil persons are not rashly, and, as we list, to be thrust from communion with the Church, insomuch that if we cannot proceed against them by any orderly course of judgment, they rather are to be suffered for the time than molested. Many there are reclaimed, as Peter ; many, as Judas, known well enough, and yet tolerated ; many which must remain undescried till the day of His appearance, by Whom the secret corners of darkness shall be brought into open light.

“Leaving therefore unto His judgment them whom we cannot stay from casting their own souls into so great



hazard, we have, in the other part of penitential jurisdiction in our power and authority to release sin, joy on all sides, without trouble or molestation unto any. And, if to give be a thing more blessed than to receive, are we not infinitely happier in being authorized to bestow the treasure of God, than when necessity doth constrain to withdraw the same?

“They which, during life and health, are never destitute of ways to delude repentance, do notwithstanding oftentimes, when their last hour draweth on, both feel that sting which before lay dead in them, and also thirst after such helps as have been always, till then, unsavoury. St. Ambrose’s words touching late repentance are somewhat hard: ‘If a man be penitent and receive absolution (which cannot in that case be denied him) even at the very point of death, and so depart, I dare not affirm he goeth out of the world well; I will counsel no man to trust to this, because I am loath to deceive any man, seeing I know not what to think of it. Shall I judge such a one a cast-away? Neither will I avouch him safe. All I am able to say is, let his estate be left to the will and pleasure of Almighty God. Wilt thou be therefore delivered of all doubt? Repent while yet thou art healthy and strong. If thou defer it till time give no longer possibility of sinning, thou canst not be thought to have left sin, but rather sin to have forsaken thee.’ Such admonitions may in their time and place be necessary, but in no wise prejudicial to the generality of God’s heavenly promise, *Whosoever a sinner doth repent from the bottom of his heart, I will put out all his iniquity.* And of this, although it hath pleased God not to leave to the world any multitude of examples, lest the careless should too far presume, yet one He hath given, and that most memorable, to withhold from despair in the mercies of God, at what instant soever man’s unfeigned conversion be wrought. Yea, because, to countervail the fault of delay, there are in the latest repentance oftentimes



the surest tokens of sincere dealing ; therefore upon especial confession made to the minister of God, he presently absolveth in this case the sick party from all sins by that authority which Jesus Christ hath committed unto him, knowing that God respecteth not so much what time is spent, as what truth is shewed in repentance.

“In sum, when the offence doth stand only between God and man’s conscience, the counsel is good which St. Chrysostom giveth : ‘I wish thee not to bewray thyself publicly, nor to accuse thyself before others. I wish thee to obey the prophet, who saith, Disclose thy way unto the Lord, confess thy sins before Him ; tell thy sins to Him, that He may blot them out. If thou be abashed to tell unto any other wherein thou hast offended, rehearse them every day between thee and thy soul. I wish thee not to confess them to thy fellow-servant, who may upbraid thee with them ; tell them to God, Who will cure them ; there is no need for thee in the presence of witnesses to acknowledge them ; let God alone see thee at thy confession. I pray and beseech you, that you would, more often than you do, confess to God eternal, and reckoning up your trespasses, desire His pardon. I carry you not into a theatre or open court of many of your fellow-servants, I seek not to detect your crimes before men ; disclose your conscience before God, unfold yourselves to Him, lay forth your wounds before Him the best Physician that is, and desire of Him salve for them.’ If hereupon it follow, as it did with David, ‘I thought, I will confess against myself my wickedness unto Thee, O Lord, and Thou forgavest me the plague of my sin :’ we have our desire, and there remaineth only thankfulness accompanied with perpetuity of care to avoid that, which being not avoided, we know we cannot remedy without new perplexity and grief. Contrariwise, if peaco with God do not follow the pains we have taken in seeking after it, if we continue disquieted and not delivered from anguish, mistrusting whether that we do be

sufficient ; it argueth that our sore doth exceed the power of our own skill, and that the wisdom of the pastor must bind up those parts, which being bruised are not able to be recured of themselves.”—*Hooker, Book vi.*

#### NOTE H.

“ Now concerning St. James’s exhortation,” says Hooker, “ whether the former branch be considered, which saith, ‘ *Is any man sick among you ? let him call upon the ancients of the Church, and let them make their prayers for him ;*’ or the latter, which stirreth up all Christian men unto mutual acknowledgment of faults amongst themselves, ‘ *Lay open your minds, make your confessions one to another ;*’ is it not plain, that the one hath relation to that gift of healing, which our Saviour promised His Church, saying, ‘ *They shall lay their hands on the sick, and the sick shall recover health ;*’ relation to that gift of healing, whereby the Apostle imposed his hands on the father of Publius, and made him miraculously a sound man ; relation finally to that gift of healing, which so long continued in practice after the Apostles’ time ? that whereas the Novatianists denied the power of the Church of God in curing sin after baptism, St. Ambrose asked them again, ‘ Why it might not as well prevail with God for spiritual, as for corporal and bodily health ; yea wherefore (saith he) do ye yourselves lay hands on the diseased, and believe it to be a work of benediction or prayer, if haply the sick person be restored to his former safety ? And of the other member which toucheth mutual confession, do not some of themselves, as namely Cajetan, deny that any other confession is meant, than only that which seeketh either association of prayers, or reconciliation,

or pardon of wrongs? Is it not confessed by the greatest part of their own retinue, that we cannot certainly affirm sacramental confession to have been meant or spoken of in this place? Howbeit, Bellarmine, delighted to run a course by himself where colourable shifts of wit will but make the way passable, standeth as formally for this place, and not less for that in St. John, than for this; St. John saith, '*If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*'; doth St. John say, If we confess to the priest, God is righteous to forgive, and if not, that our sins are unpardonable? No, but the titles of God *just* and *righteous* do import that He pardoneth sin only for His promise sake; 'And there is not (they say) any promise of forgiveness upon confession made to God without the priest'; not any promise, but with this condition, and yet this condition no where expressed.

"Is it not strange, that the Scripture, speaking so much of repentance and of the several duties which appertain thereunto, should ever mean, and no where mention that one condition, without which all the rest is utterly of none effect; or will they say, because our Saviour hath said to His ministers, '*Whose sins ye retain, &c.*' and because they can remit no more than what the offenders have confessed, that therefore, by the virtue of His promise, it standeth with the righteousness of God to take away no man's sins until by Auricular Confession they be opened unto the priest.

"They are men that would seem to honour antiquity, and none more to depend upon the reverend judgment thereof. I dare boldly affirm, that for many hundred years after Christ the Fathers held no such opinion; they did not gather by our Saviour's words any such necessity of seeking the priest's absolution from sin by secret and (as they now term it) sacramental confession. Public confession they thought necessary by way of discipline, not private confession as in the nature of a sacrament, necessary."—*Hooker, Book vi.*

## NOTE I.

Without attaching any undue importance to painful instances on record, the details of which cannot be alluded to without offence, and have been dwelt upon by some controversialists with too little regard to moral propriety, I will content myself with only a single quotation from a presbyter of the Church of Rome, on this subject. The author is Juan de Avila, one of the most eminent spiritual teachers of the Church of Spain, whose "Spiritual Epistles" were translated and published in English, "Permissu Superiorum, in 8vo., 1632." He is giving the advice of his experience to a young preacher.

"Let me also advise you not to give yourself too much to hearing the confessions of women, especially young women : for it is a perilous business, if a man has not some special gift of God, which may make him insensible to temptation. Turn your attention more to the profit of the men ; for if you once begin to look after female penitents, you will have little leisure to devote to any thing else ; so apt are they to waste time in matters of little moment or benefit. And I would have your principal object be to preach ; for you will do much, if you do this well ; and as to confessing, neither altogether take up the practice, nor altogether leave it unregarded."—*Treatise i., Lett. 38.*

This sensible advice is from a man, who was in his own country another Francis de Sales, or Borromeo. The words appear fully to justify the practice of the Church of England ; and they are the more striking as coming from one who was himself obliged to suit his doctrine to the council of Trent.

For the same reason I will give the following quotation from the late Rev. David O'Croly, who for upwards of twenty years performed the duties of a confessor in the Church of Rome, and whose statements, with reference to to the confessional, are therefore entitled to great respect.



“A priest in the chair of confession is the most arbitrary of judges. He acts without check or controul.—His admonitions, his commands, his decisions, his casuistry, are not the necessary result of fixed principles, or acknowledged maxims, but of his own particular qualities or dispositions—of his caprice, of his ignorance, of his prejudices, of his perversity, of his profligacy. Yet confession, under all these forbidding circumstances, is announced, is trumpeted as a necessary means of salvation—*a secunda post naufragium tabula*, ‘a second plank after shipwreck;’ and the favour of heaven, the grace of God, the justification of the sinner, is restricted, as an adjunct, to human precariousness and profanation !

“But how is this machinery of confession made to work ? how is it brought into action ?—In the country the poor people practise confession, for the most part, through dread of public exposure. And how do they practise it ?—how do they prepare for it ? When they hear of the priest’s arrival at the station-house, they quit their labour in the field or in the barn, hurry to the confessor, make a compendious recital of some sins they are in the constant habit of committing, and confessing, make some sort of a promise of amendment, as a matter of routine, receive absolution, hear the mass recited in Latin, take the blessed sacrament, pay the confession dues or battle with the priest, return to their labour with an obligation of repeating a number of rosaries within a given time, and think no more of the transaction. In the cities and large towns, confession is very generally neglected, except at the point of death.

“Does confession improve the morals ? It is said that a bad confession or a confession not clothed with the necessary conditions, not accompanied by a change of disposition and a firm purpose of amendment, super-induces the guilt of sacrilege, and adds immeasurably to the guilt of the pretended peni-

tent. Must not this take place in most instances, from the mode in which confession is practised : and if so, what improvement in public morals can result from it ? But this is only a theoretical argument. Let the question be decided by general facts. Are those who practise confession better conducted or less immoral than those who do not ?—Are they better husbands, better fathers, better subjects, better citizens—less given to turbulence, to sedition, to lying, to injustice ? Have the Roman Catholics the advantage of the Reformers in this respect ?—Compare nations together. Confession is universally practised in Spain and Portugal. It is not practised in England or Scotland. Is the state of morality, public and private, among the Spaniards and Portuguese higher in the scale of virtue than among Englishmen and Scotchmen ? What was the state of morals throughout Christendom in the times of old when the benefits or evils of this practice were universally felt ? History will not give a very creditable answer to the question. Will any one venture to say that the Irish Roman Catholics, who go to confession at stations twice a year or once a year, as they would to a fair or pattern, are superior in virtue and good manners, to their Protestant fellow countrymen, who learn their Christian duties from the sacred Scriptures ? Or that the Spaniards and Portuguese, and Italians, are superior as men and as Christians, to the people of England, or Scotland, or Holland, or the Protestant States of Germany ? Or that the Roman Catholics, taken collectively and individually, do not lose considerably by the comparison ? And if so, is it right that malevolent, profligate priests—and many there are of this revolting description—should be enabled with impunity to lay snares for innocence, and to break into the sanctuary of private life, and make it a matter of conscience with weak-minded servants and labourers to ruin the interests of a good master and employer ?”

I shall conclude this note with the following sensible remarks from a clergyman of the Church of England, who, although no Romanizer, has always ranked as a high Churchman.

“The extent to which the confessors have thought it right to carry their examinations on subjects concerning which the Apostle recommends that they be not once named among Christians, and which may be seen either in Den’s Theology, or Burchard’s decrees, c. 19. Paris, 1549, affords a melancholy, painful, and sickening subject for contemplation ; especially, when it is considered that they were Christian Clergy who did this, and that it was done in aid, as they supposed, of the Christian religion. The fearful effects of these examinations upon the priests themselves, I will do no more than allude to ; he who may think it necessary to satisfy himself upon the point, may consult the cases contemplated and provided for (among others,) by Cardinal Cajetan, in his *Opuscula*, Lugd. 1562, p. 114. In the Bull of Pius IV., *Contra sollicitantes in confessione*, dated Ap. 16, 1561. (*Bullarium Magn.* Luxemb. 1727. ii. p. 48,) and in a similar one of Gregory XV., dated Aug. 30, 1622. (*Gregor. XV. Constit. Rom.* 1622. p. 114,) there is laid open another fearful scene of danger to female confitents from wicked priests, ‘mulieres penitentes ad actus inhonestos dum earum audiunt confessiones alliciendo et provocando.’ Against which flagrant dangers, and the preparatory steps of sapping and undermining the mental modesty of a young person by examinations of particular kinds, it is vain to think that the feeble bulls of the bishops of Rome can afford any security. These observations apply to the system of the Roman Church, peculiar to itself, of *compelling* the disclosure of the most minute details of the most secret thoughts and actions. As to *encouraging* persons whose minds are *burthened* with the remembrance of fearful sins, to ease themselves of the burthen by revealing it to one at whose hands they may seek guidance and consolation and

prayer, it is a totally distinct question, and nothing but wilful art will attempt to confound them. On this point I see no reason to withdraw a regret which I have before expressed as to its disuse in the Church of England ; for I cannot but believe that, were it more frequently had recourse to, many a mind would depart the world at peace with itself and with God, which now sinks to the grave under a bond of doubt and fear, through want of confidence to make use of ghostly remedies.”—*Perceval's Romish Schism*, p. 378.

#### NOTE K.

“ Concerning confession as it is a special act of repentance, the first thing that is to be said of it, is, that it is due only to God ; for He is the Person injured ; sin is the prevarication of His laws ; He is our Judge, and He only can pardon, as He only can punish eternally. ‘ Non tibi dico, ut tua peccata, tanquam in pompam, in publicum proferas, neque ut te accuses, sed ut pareas Prophetæ dicenti, Revela Domino viam tuam. Apud Deum ea confitere, apud Judicem confitere peccata tua, orans si non linguâ, saltem memoriâ, et ita roga ut tui misereatur.’ ‘ I do not enjoin thee to betray thyself to the public ear, bringing thy sins as into a theatre, but obey the Prophet, saying, Reveal thy way unto the Lord. Confess to God, confess to thy Judge ; praying if not with thy tongue, yet at least with thy mind, and pray so that thou mayest be heard :’ so St. Crysostom.—And upon those words of St. Paul, ‘ Let a man examine himself,’ he saith, ‘ Non revelavit ulcus, non in commune theatrum accusationem produxit,’ &c. ‘ He did not reveal his ulcer, he did not bring his accusation into the common theatre ; he made none witness of his sins, but in his conscience, none standing by, God only excepted, Who sees all things.’—And again, upon that of the psalm ; ‘ My sin is always against me ;’—‘ If thou art ashamed to speak it to any one, say them daily in thy



mind : I do not say, that thou confess them to thy fellow-servant who may upbraid thee ; say them to God Ἀμάρτυρον ἔστω τὸ δικαστήριον, Θεὸς ὁράτω μόνος ἑξομολογούμενον. ‘Let this judicatory be without assessors or witnesses, let God alone see thy confession,’—‘Quod si, verecundiâ retrahente, revelare ea coram hominibus erubescis, illi, quem latere non possunt, confiteri ea jugi supplicatione non desinas, ac dicere, Iniquitatem meam agnosco, &c., qui et absque ullius verecundiâ publicatione curare, et sine improprio peccata donare consuevit ;’ so Cassian in the imitation of St. Ambrose : ‘If bashfulness call thee back, and thou art ashamed to reveal them before men, cease not, by a continual supplication, to confess them to Him from Whom they cannot be concealed ; Who, without any pressing upon our modesty, is wont to cure, and without upbraiding, to forgive us our sins.’ And the fathers of the council of Cabaillon advanced this duty by divers sentences of Scripture ;—‘Ita duntaxat ut et Deo, qui remissor est peccatorum, confiteamur peccata nostra, et cum David dicamus, Delictum meum cognitum tibi feci, et injustitiam meam non abscondi : Dixi, confitebor injustitias meas Domino, et Tu remisisti impietatem peccati mei,’ &c. ‘God is the pardoner of sins, and therefore let us confess to Him, and say with David : I have made my sin known unto Thee, and mine unrighteousness have I not hid ; I said, I will confess mine iniquity unto the Lord, and Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.’ But this thing is pressed most earnestly by Laurentius Novarrensis, who because he was a father of the fifth age, his words are of more use, by being a testimony that the ecclesiastical repentance, which we find to be now pressed by some as simply necessary, was not the doctrine of those times. ‘From that day in which thou goest out of the font, thou becomest to thyself a continual font, and a daily remission. There is no *absolute* necessity of the priest’s right hand ; from thenceforward God hath appointed thee to be thy own judge,

thy own arbiter, and hath given thee knowledge whereby of thyself thou mayest discern good and evil ; and because while thou remainest in the body, thou canst not be free from sin, God hath, after baptism, placed thy remedy within thyself ; he hath placed pardon within thy own choice, so that thou art not, in the day of thy necessity, indispensably tied to seek a priest ; but thou thyself, as if thou wert a most skilful doctor and master, mayest amend thy error within thee, and wash away thy sin by repentance. The fountain is never dry, the water is within thee ; absolution is in thy choice, sanctification is in thy diligence, pardon is within the dew of thine own tears. Do not thou therefore look either for John or Jordan ; be thou thy own baptist, viz., in the baptism of repentance. Thou art defiled after thou art washed, thy bowels are defiled, thy soul is polluted ; plunge thyself in the waters of repentance, cleanse thyself by abundance of tears, let compunction be plentifully in thy bowels,—and the Lord Himself shall baptize thee with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and shall heap the fruits of repentance, and lay them up like wheat ; but the chaff of thy sins He shall burn with unquenchable fire.’ Many testimonies out of antiquity to the same purpose, are to be seen ready collected by Gratian, under the title ‘ De Pœnitentiâ.’—*Bishop Jeremy Taylor on Ecclesiastical Penance, Edit. Heber, ix., 243.*

The following quotation should be pondered seriously by the young clergy who are urging the necessity of Auricular Confession. They are the words of one of our soundest churchmen :—

“ Since there is no necessity declared in scripture of confessing all our sins to a priest, no mention of sacramental penance, or confession, it must needs seem strange that a doctrine, of which there is no commandment in scripture, no direction for the manner of doing so difficult a work, no office or officer described to any such purpose ; that a doctrine, I

say, of which in the fountain of salvation there is no spring, should yet become, in process of time, to be the condition of salvation : and yet for preaching, praying, baptizing, communicating, we have precept upon precept, and line upon line : we have in Scripture three epistles written to two bishops, in which the episcopal office is abundantly described ; and excellent canons established : and the parts of their duty enumerated : and yet no care taken about the office of ‘father confessor.’ Indeed we find a pious exhortation to all spiritual persons, that ‘if any man be overtaken in a fault, they should restore such a one in the spirit of meekness ;’ ‘restore him,’ that is, to the public peace and communion of the church, from which by his delinquency he fell ; and restore him also, by the word of His proper ministry, to the favour of God ; by exhortations to him, by reproving of him, by praying for him : and besides this, we have some little limits more, which the Church of Rome, if they please, may make good use of in this question ; such as are, ‘that they who sin, should be rebuked before all men, that others also may fear ;’ which indeed is a good warranty for public discipline, but very little for private confession. And St. Paul charges Timothy, that he should ‘lay hands suddenly on no man,’ that he be not partaker of other men’s sins ; which is a good caution against the Roman way of absolving them that confess, as soon as they have confessed, before they have made their satisfactions. The same Apostle speaks also of ‘some that creep into houses, and lead captive silly women ;’ I should have thought, he had intended it against such, as then abused Auricular Confession ; it being so like what they do now ; but that St. Paul knew nothing of these lately-introduced practices : and lastly, he commands every one that is to receive the holy communion, ‘to examine himself, and so let him eat :’ he forgot, it seems, to enjoin them to go to confession to be examined : which certainly he could never

have done more opportunely than here ; and, if it had been necessary, he could never have omitted it more indecently. But it seems, the first Christians were admitted upon other terms by the apostles, than they are at this day by the Roman clergy. And indeed it were infinitely strange, that since, in the Old Testament, remission of sins was given to every one, that confessed to God, and turned from his evil way, that, in the New Testament, to which liberty is a special privilege, and the imposed yoke of Christ infinitely more easy than the burden of the law ; and repentance is the very formality of the Gospel-covenant ; and yet, that pardon of our sins shall not be given to us Christians on so easy terms as it was to the Jews ; but an intolerable new burden shall be made a new condition of obtaining pardon. And this will appear yet the more strange ; when we consider, that all the sermons of the prophets concerning repentance, were not derivations from Moses's law, but homilies evangelical, and went before to prepare the way of the Lord ; and John Baptist was last of them ; and that, in this matter, the sermons of the prophets were but the Gospel antedated ; and, in this affair, there was no change but to the better and to a clearer manifestation of the divine mercy, and the sweet yoke of Christ ; the disciples of Christ preached the same doctrine of repentance that the Baptist did, and the Baptist the same that the prophets did, and there was no difference ; Christ was the same in all, and He that commanded his disciples to fast to God alone in private, intended that all the parts of repentance transacted between God and our consciences, should be as sufficient as that one of fasting, and that other of prayer : and it is said so in all ; ‘for, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’ It is God alone that can cleanse our hearts, and He that cleanses us, He alone does forgive us ; and this is upon our confession to Him : His justice and faithfulness



are at stake for it ; and therefore it supposes a promise : which we often find upon our confessions made to God, but it was never promised upon confession made to the priest.

“If we consider whether this thing be reasonable, to impose such a yoke upon the necks of the disciples, which upon their fathers was not put in the Old Testament, nor ever commanded in the New ; we shall find, that, although many good things might be consequent to the religious and free and prudent use of confession ; yet, by changing into a doctrine of God, that which, at most, is a commandment of man, it will not, by all the contingent good, make recompense for all the intolerable evils it introduces. And here, first, I consider, that many times things seem profitable to us, and may minister to good ends ; but God judges them useless and dangerous : for He judges not as we judge. The worshipping of angels, and the abstaining from meats, which some false apostles introduced, looked well, and pretended to humility, and mortification of the body ; but the Apostle approved them not : and of the same mind were the succeeding ages of the Church ; who condemned the dry diet, and the ascetic fasts of Montanus, though they were pretended only for discipline ; but when they came to be imposed, they grew intolerable. Certainly, men lived better lives, when, by the discipline of the Church, sinners were brought to public stations and penance, than now they do by all the advantages, real or pretended, from Auricular Confession ; and yet the Church thought fit to lay it aside, and nothing is left but the shadow of it.

“This whole topic can only be a prudential consideration, and can no way infer a divine institution ; for though it was as convenient before Christ, as since, and might have as now, had the same effect upon the public or private good, then, as now ; yet God was not pleased to appoint it in almost forty ages ; and we say, He hath not done it yet. However, let it be considered, that there being some things, which, St. Paul

says, are not to be ‘so much as named’ amongst Christians ; it must needs look indecently, that all men and all women should come and make the priest’s ears a common sewer to empty all their filthiness ; and that which a modest man would blush to hear, he must be used to, and it is the greatest part of his employment to attend to. True it is, that the physician must see and handle the impurest ulcers ; but it is, because the cure does not depend upon the patient, but upon the physician, who, by general advertisement, cannot cure the patient, unless he had a universal medicine, which the priest hath : the medicine of repentance, which can indifferently cure all sins, whether the priest know them or no. And therefore, all this filthy communication is therefore intolerable, because it is not necessary : and it not only pollutes the priest’s ears, but his tongue too ; for, lest any circumstance, or any sin, be concealed, he thinks himself obliged to interrogate, and proceed to particular questions in the basest things. Such as that which is to be seen in Burchard, and such which are too largely described in Sanchez ; which thing does not only deturpate all honest and modest conversation, but it teaches men to understand more sins than ever they (it may be) knew of.”—*Jeremy Taylor’s Dissuasive from Popery*, vol. xi. p. 30.

#### NOTE L.

These statements have been fully proved before, but *ex abundanti*, two other quotations shall be given, the first from the judicious Hooker, the second from Archbishop Usher.

“They bind all men upon pain of everlasting condemnation and death to make confessions to their ghostly fathers of every great offence they know, and can remember, that they have committed against God. Hath Christ in His gospel so delivered the doctrine of repentance unto the world ? Did His apostles so preach it to nations ? Have the fathers so believed, or so taught ? Surely Novatian was not so merci-

less of depriving the Church of power to absolve some certain offenders, as they in imposing upon all a necessity thus to confess. Novatian would not deny that God might remit that which the Church could not, whereas in the Papacy it is maintained, that what we conceal from men, God Himself should never pardon. By which oversight, as they have here surcharged the world with multitude, but much abated the weight of confessions, so the careless manner of their absolution hath made discipline, for the most part, amongst them, a bare formality ; yea, rather a means of emboldening unto vicious and wicked life, than either any help to prevent future, or medicine to remedy present evils in the soul of man. The fathers were slow and always fearful to absolve any before very manifest tokens given of a true penitent, and contrite spirit. It was not their custom to remit sin first, and then to impose works of satisfaction, as the fashion of Rome is now ; insomuch that this their preposterous course, and misordered practices hath bred also in them an error concerning the end and purpose of these works. For against the guiltiness of sin and the danger of everlasting condemnation thereby incurred, confession and absolution succeeding the same, are, as they take it, a remedy sufficient ; and therefore what their penitentiaries do think good to enjoin further, whether it be a number of Ave-Maries daily to be scored up, a journey of pilgrimage to be undertaken, some few dishes of ordinary diet to be exchanged, offerings to be made at the shrines of saints, or a little to be scraped off from men's superfluities for relief of poor people, all is in lieu or exchange with God, Whose justice, notwithstanding our pardon, yet oweth us still some temporal punishment, either in this life or in the life to come, except we quit it ourselves here with works of the former kind, and continued till the balance of God's most strict severity shall find the pains we have taken equivalent with the plagues which we should endure, or else the mercy of the Pope relieve us. And at this postern-gate cometh in the whole mart of Papal indulgences so infinitely strewed

that the pardon of sin, which heretofore was obtained hardly and by much suit, is with them become now almost impossible to be escaped.”—*Hooker, book vi., on the Absolution of Penitents.*

“We find,” says Archbishop Usher, “that Lawrence, Bishop of Novaria, in his Homily de Pœnitentia, doth resolutely determine, that for obtaining remission of sins a man needeth not to resort unto any priest, but that his own internal repentance is sufficient for that matter. ‘God,’ saith He, ‘after baptism hath appointed thy remedy within thyself, he hath put remission in thine own power, that thou needest not seek a priest when thy necessity requireth ; but thou thyself now, as a skilful and plain master, mayest amend thine error within thyself, and wash away thy sin by repentance.’ ‘He hath given unto thee,’ saith another, somewhat to the same purpose, ‘the power of binding and loosing. Thou hast bound thyself with the chain of the love of wealth : loose thyself with the injunction of the love of poverty. Thou hast bound thyself with the furious desire of pleasures ; loose thyself with temperance. Thou hast bound thyself with the misbelief of Eunomius ; loose thyself with the religious embracing of the right faith.’

“And that we may see how variable men’s judgments were touching the matter of confession in the ages following, Bede would have us ‘confess our daily and light sins one unto another, but open the uncleanness of the greater leprosy to the priest.’ Alcuinus, not long after him, would have us ‘confess all the sins that we could remember.’ Others were of another mind. For some (as it appeareth by the writings of the same Alcuinus, and of Haymo) would not confess their sins to the priest ; but ‘said it was sufficient for them that they did confess their sins to God alone ;’ provided always that they ceased from those sins for the time to come. Others confessed their sins unto the priests, but ‘not fully ; as may be seen in the council of Cavaillon, held in the days of Charles the Great ; where, though the Fathers think that this had



‘need to be amended;’ yet they freely acknowledge that it remained still a question, whether men should only confess to God, or to the priests also: and they themselves put this difference betwixt both those confessions, that the one did properly serve for the cure, the other for direction in what sort of repentance, and so the cure, should be performed. Their words are these: ‘Some say that they ought to confess their sins only unto God, and some think that they are to be confessed unto the priests: both of which, not without great fruit, is practised within the holy Church. Namely thus, that we both confess our sins unto God, Who is the forgiver of sins, (saying with David; *‘I acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess against myself my transgressions unto the Lord: and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin:’*) and, according to the institution of the Apostle, confess our sins one to another, and pray one for another, that we may be healed. The confession therefore which is made unto God, purgeth sins: but that which is made unto the priest, teacheth in what sort those sins should be purged. For God, the Author and bestower of salvation and health, giveth the same sometime by the invisible administration of His power,—sometime by the operation of physicians.”—*Answer to a Jesuit, page 91, printed at the Pitt Press, Cambridge, MDCCXXXV.*

The reader, in these Notes, has been presented with the testimony of the Fathers, and the opinion of those learned divines of the Church of England who have written upon the subject of Auricular Confession. No modern theologian approaches the latter either in Patrology or in Biblical Exegesis. We have, then, I repeat it, the authority of the Primitive Church and of the reformed Church of England, for saying that confession to man, though it may be a means of comfort to some, is necessary to no one, and that it is not to be numbered among the means of grace.









